

MY FLIGHT TO VENUS

**A TRUE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE
LONG BEFORE THE ADVENT OF
THE FLYING SAUCER
HERALDING THE COMING OF
INTERPLANETARY SPACECRAFT**

DANA HOWARD

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1.

Our tiny Taylorcraft plane mushed sloppily along through labyrinth of tangled air currents, the nose of the sleek yellow job a pitched downward at a dangerous angle, as if sniffing the earth for a safe place to land.

Stephen, my fiance, knew the dangers of flying too low over Superstition's unpredictable mountain, but I had urged him on that I might catch a glimpse of the deep and lonely interior, said to be still untrodden by the footprints of man. All my life I had loved adventures in danger, and the accompanying thrills, and this to me was a grand adventure.

Suddenly, Stephen's face went pale and the muscles of his neck stood out in taut knots. Automatically, an unsteady hand reached for the throttle.

„We're caught in a downdraft," he yelled hysterically.

I sat rigid in my seat, experiencing that first terrifying emotion of fear, which turned just as quickly to courage. It was an endless moment for the light weight craft, now trapped in the rushing tide of space, seemed to be turning a succession of sommersaults. Every cell in my body jammed in a whirling, swirling motion. It was a ghastly feeling, one moment upright, the next on my head.

All about us the canyon walls were careening dizzily, the space between us and terra firma literally alive with angry little demons, each one assigned to the job of our destruction. I'm sure in that moment both Stephen and I caught a glimpse of that ever present Eternity.

Stephen finally cut the switch:

„Hold tight dear,” he yelled. „I’ve got to make a crash.”

I gripped my safety belt and braced my body for the fall. There was still a blind chance we might make an upright landing, but it seemed so hopeless. If only the dancing walls would stand still. But they sped past us faster and faster, revealing strata after strata of volcanic earth that in the days long ago had been forced up from the bottom of the dark, canyon floors.

I knew that only a miracle could save us from being dashed to pieces on the swaying rocks, but I still believed in miracles.

The cosmic clock ticked off its final toll. Beneath me I felt a violent jolt ... a crash ... then a tip and a tear. The light in my mind went out. It was midnight at high noon. Though my eyes were open, they were unseeing. My lips went through the motions of articulation, but no words came forth. Locked in a grip of numbness, I sat frozen with dread uncertainty. The moments passed, but they were only agonizing dots in time where nothing seemed real in a world of reality’. I wasn’t sure whether I was still a part of the mortal world, or whether I had taken refuge across that evanescent borderline of death.

At the end of what seemed an indeterminable length of time, awareness returned. My first thought was for Stephen. He seemed to be all right. Next my mind flew to our little yellow buzz-bird. Poor thing! She had dropped her fuselage. The left wing was ripped off. The landing gear was washed out, and the motor loose from its

mount, had dropped to the ground. Only the tail group was left intact.

Moreover, we were trapped in the dense interior of Arizona's Superstition Mountain. I knew the dangers that lurked over every inch of the cactus-carpeted mesas and the precipitous rugged cliffs. All about us there was evidence of terrific volcanic upheavals. In some places there were heavy layers of basaltic slag that through the eons of time had been thrust up through the sedimentary formations. In other places -the pounding of the elements had made narrow, dangerous gorges dotted with stagnant water holes, the home of death-dealing wild life and poisonous reptiles. But, more virulent than all was the age-old curse of Superstition, for no man had ever lived to tell the true story of this monoliths fabulous gold.

I managed somehow to crawl out of the plane, then dragged myself over the hot sands, coming to rest finally beneath a patch of shade temporarily loaned by a sprawling creosote bush. How long I lay there I do not know, but I was suddenly aware of sounds like the roar of an earthquake beneath me. Simultaneously with these sounds, my body became alive with a Peculiar tingling glow. In an instant the feeling permeated every cell and atom of my being, and I seemed to be dancing to the ecstasy of strange, polarized currents. The door to my mind opening and closing caused my consciousness to swing back and forth between reality and unreality.

I leaped to my feet as if to herald in, some cosmic drama. Then IT came, starting at my ankles like a gorgeous display of lighted fireworks ... a transcendent violet flame that fanned out until it enveloped my body

like an aura of sacred fire. As the flames grew in intensity, extending over a wide periphery, it raced through every cell, cleansing and purifying as it went. Channels of my mind that had been tightly closed before, opened up like an enchanted lotus flower. I was vibrant, magnetic, and I could feel the effervescence of an enthusiasm I had never felt before. My heart, beating in rhapsodic rhythm was tuned in now with the heartbeat of the universe. It was no longer a citizen of a little inhibited world, but a guest in the World Universal. I was no longer a separate entity, a human Personality, but a part and parcel of every inch of God's glorious creation. In that moment I knew as others before me have known, the true meaning of the UNITY and ONENESS of ALL.

The sacred flame grew into a holocaust of splendor, continuing for an indefinite time. It finally died away leaving only an essence. Alive with the fire of creation, everything within my range of vision had changed. The landscape, the wild flowers, the trees ... they all fairly scintillated with an array of gorgeous hues that had nothing to do with the Arizona sunshine. They were not something apart now. I was ONE with them. They were ONE with me. In those sacred moments I came to know the meaning of life. With the opening of the channels of perception, the living reality of all things, I understood with clarity. Being no longer bound to the bondage of earth, my mind and my soul were free to travel at will.

Again my attention was captured by the rumbling sounds. Now, interspersed with the vaporings of my mind, came bits of conversation ... fragmentary sentences about temples of pure gold, interplanetary spaceships,

people from other planets. Then, coming toward me, I perceived powerful lights, radiating first a deep violet, then magenta. They came closer and closer as if timed with heavenly precision.

Still wrapped in the warm intoxication of the spirit, my vision was directed to a gnarled old tree overlooking the antediluvian hills. Leaning casually against the grotesque trunk was a woman-being of unsurpassed loveliness. Her head was radiant with a crown of fire, strands of golden hair cascading gently over her beautiful, slightly olive-skinned shoulders. The strange, mystic light flooding her dark, prophetic eyes, added a wistful something to all her other charms.

I seemed to glide on rhythmic feet toward this lovely creature as though she were expecting me. She smiled her welcome.

„Have no fears, Child of Earth,” she intoned. „Let the doors of your mind be opened and we of the faraway planets will speak to you in poetry and song.” Her voice was heavenly, rapturous, and there was something all-wise, all-knowing about her. My heart started beating wildly in my breast.

„Daughter of Earth,” she continued. „Since childhood you have yearned to turn back the eons of time. You have wanted to know the secret of the earth’s smothered fires. Of the angry floods and elemental storms that gave your land its present form. Many long nights have you pondered over the mysteries of the heavens above. You have wondered about other planets and their way of life. Ere long, Child of Earth, you will be admitted through the portals. You will be instructed in the things that have

baffled you throughout life. Your mind will be awakened - your soul will be challenged. Your heart will know love. Come with me, my Daughter. Come!"

It was then I observed for the first time, a beautiful rocket-shaped ship suspended in midair about three hundred feet from the earth. It was beyond mortal words to describe. In the main it seemed to be constructed of some sort of translucent material, but trimmed in gold and gem-studded. An almost invisible ladder extended from the ship to the earth, and I obediently followed the radiant being up the flimsy stairs without questioning. Once aboard my sacrosanct companion vanished and I never saw her again.

The giant ship rose straight up from the earth, rhythmically and noiselessly. Soon we were literally racing through the etheran blue skies, yet the only evidence of speed was the stream of yellow fire that flowed like the tail of a comet.

I soon realized that I was not alone here. There were other passengers aboard this luxury liner, too. A motley group they were, some silent and morose, but in the main they seemed happy.

I was immediately attracted to two of the passengers, a young American Indian named Blue Cloud, and his pal, a weather-beaten prospector named Cactus Jeff Stringfeller.

But I had little to say to them. Speeding through the azure-blue space I tried to piece together the things that were happening to me. Where were we going? Why was

I here? And Stephen – where was Stephen? But, I could come to no conclusions about my mental ramblings.

Eventually, for there seemed to be no time here, I discovered we were dropping altitude, preparatory to making a landing. I think I experienced a moment of keen apprehension, but when the ship finally rolled on solid substance, I breathed lightly again. I found myself gazing in spellbound wonderment at an enchanted city of splendor.

Cactus Jeff, in a gesture of reverence, removed his weather-beaten straw hat from his balding head. The lines around his thin, rugged face wrinkled into a smile.

„This sure is a purty place, aint’it?” he drawled.

Blue Cloud grinned, his dark eyes flashing the fire of approval.

„Blue Cloud coming back home. This land of First People.”

„You mean, this is the home of your ancestors?” I questioned.

Cactus Jeff flashed a note of warning.

„I wouldn’t go to pressin’ Blue Cloud none, Miss,” he said, „He don’t do no talkin’ less’n he wants to.”

„That means, Blue Cloud knows something but I’d better bide my time,” I said, laughing to put these two at ease,

„I reckon so, Miss,” Jeff agreed.

So inspired was I by it all, I pinched myself again and again to make sure I wasn’t a ghost. Despite the grandeur

of this nature-woven world I was still filled with a sort of frightened rapture.

The beauty and symmetry was perfection itself. The crescent-shaped city, bathed now in an effulgence of ever-changing color, was something out of the realm of my wildest dreams. Lovely exotic gardens, strange tall trees, shrubs and flowers in great bundance ... it was a grand design such as our earth plane had never witnessed.

In the distance, sun-kissed mountains reared their lofty heads to mingle with the color spectrum of the universe. Added b the natural beauty was the man-made magnificence. It was apparent that the mortal toilers who had planned and built this fabulous place had labored not for gold, but for love. There was a dignity and congruity about the architecture that could be described only in the language of the gods. Spires and domes glistened against the red and gold sky. In fact the whole place seemed to be charged with the finer essences.

„Why ... it's so calm and Peaceful here,” I exulted.
„How I wish Stephen had come, too.

„Thar's plenty of gold in them thar hills,” Cactus blisked. „An I'm a-goin' to get me a prospector's pick and go to diggn'.”

Blue Cloud's face turned to stone.

„Gold here belonging to First People. No good to dig.”
Cactus' eyes flashed fire,

„Thar you go again, Blue Cloud. Allus a-tryin' to skeer me out. I ain't a-feared of no Indian ghosts. As soon as ever I gets settled I'm a-goin' off in them hills.”

„Maybe you'll find some gold,”

I said absently. „But how on earth would you ever get it back home again?”

„Maybe we won't be a-goin' back, Miss. I kinda likes the looks of this place.

I ain't never been happy back home since the; took my mine away from me. Says I ... I betcha if I ever gets another chance ... nobody's ever goin' to take it way from me.”

„That mine was a humdinger,” he went on, remenescing into the past. „Runnin' me better'n \$1750 a ton. Government says ..., gotta be shuttin' ye down, Cactus.”

„There's an old saying,” I reminded him, that all that glitters is not gold.” Maybe you're here to find something better than gold. Something you can take back home with you.”

Blue Cloud's face lighted up with a smile.

„Old Ones plenty wise,” he said.

I think you are right, Blue Cloud,” I answered, „If this is Utopia, then I should say our own earth has woefully failed.”

„This home Morning Star,” Blue Cloud returned, Morning Star Shaman Before People long, long time ago.”

Cactus Jeff chuckled. „Well, I'll be hoofin' the devil 'round a stomp, Mebbe we ain't no place, Blue Cloud. Maybe we're jest dreamin.”

Our vague speculations were soon interrupted by the strains of harps and flutes and cymbals coming over the ether waves. With it came wisps of song and laughter.

„Listen boys,” I shushed. „Hark, the angels sing.”

„Sky music,” Blue Cloud proclaimed, looking upward with reverence.

We listened for moments, entranced with the medley of heavenly melodies. Then, as if propelled on winged feet, we started to glide in the direction from whence the celestial strains had come. The closer to source the more soul-stirring the music.

„Why, it’s actually heavenly,” I breathed in rapture, as we came close to the scene of the merry-making. The pagentry was enhanced only by the gorgeous costumes and glitter of sparkling gems that adorned the merry-makers. Here was an array of pulchritude such as even the silver screen had never seen back home. They danced like nymphs and fawns, their bodies lifted to the heights in rhythm and abandon.

A lovely girl creature and her male companion captured my attention. Surely the „master potter” had done himself proud when he turned out this pair of creations. The modler’s most divine inspiration had gone into the girl’s lovely features. Against the delicate fragility of her slightly tinted olive skin, her eyes revealed an azure light. Dark, flowing tresses ornamented her lovely shoulders and the curves and grace of her lithe body would have sent any earthly Venus scurrying to cover. A robe of spun gold hung loosely over her

beautiful bosom, setting off a diadem of dazzling gems in her forehead.

Her dancing partner was like the Prince of All Apollo's. His somewhat Grecian features made a perfect setting for eyes of ocean depths and a nose and mouth chiseled from the finest of clay. He, too, was slightly Oriental in coloring, despite the fact that his finely stranded hair was inclined toward blondness. Attired in raiment of the best, bloomer-like pantaloons banded at the ankle with strands of gold ... gold and silver brocade over a heavy satin-like material, comprised his tunic. White kidskin sandals with matching anklets shod his well-shaped feet.

„Friends from the Planet Earth, we welcome you to the Planet Venus,” he greeted, bowing low in front of me. There was a quality in his voice that instantly played on the harpstrings of my soul like divine music. Somehow I wanted to spill tears of joy.

Blue Cloud made an immediate adjustment. He seemed quite at home, in fact.

„Great Mystery good,” he beamed. „Always Old Ones have best land.”

Cactus Jeff, who had never shared in any of the cultural pursuits of civilization, was completely baffled by it all.

„This is the best medicine show I ever seed,” he cackled humorously.

As my own faculty of speech returned, I added my bit.

„It is so beautiful here, sir. I'm sure this must be the way God intended all His creations to be.”

„We have beauty in abundance, to be sure, dear lady,” he returned.

„But with us, beauty is an ideal to strive for.

It is an ideal bound up in the laws of our land. But do not fear fair one of the Earth ... in your own good day the earth plane will come into its own. The noblest conquest of all earthly civilization is yet to come.”

„You mean?” I questioned breathlessly. „That some day our earth will know splendor like this?”

„Yes, my lady. Yours is not in irrevocable fate. To be sure, the Planet Earth has lost the art of pristine living, But the same beauty, the same exalted happiness known to us here, will one day be yours also.”

„What a divine privilege it is to come here,” I exulted.

„Golden values are always earned, LeLando (for this was his name) replied. „While you are with us as our honored guests your minds will be enlightened ... your hearts will be free.”

Cactus Jeff, still anticipating a fling with the prospector’s pick, snorted:

„We’ll be a-findin’ a wagon load of gold, too.”

LeLando smiled, for he seemed to understand.

„Gold is in abundance in our land for we live in the light of the golden ray,” he said.

2.

The scars of earth living were completely healed. The good people of Venus were making every effort to make us happy. Here in this enchanted land they lived life on the upward arcs. Even the air was filled with the sweet fragrance of beauty, incarnate. With us It was like one long mounting crescendo of expectation, for we wore kept constantly in a state of exciting change.

LeLando had arranged for our living quarters in the home of Ona and David, two wonderful people who lived on a hillside overlooking the city. It was a modest home compared with some of the palatial mansions, but it was rich in simplicity and care had been taken to obtain the best view possible. The landscape was heavenly. Mystic pools and thermal springs ... rare old trees and gardens. Besides the good taste in furnishings there was a warm, inexplicable charm to the interior. Most of the rooms were circular in shape; all had high, delicately frescoed ceilings. The wall hangings and murals depicted scenes from events taken from their own fabulous histories.

The windows were made of some inflexible material, designed to admit streams of natural radiance and the full array of spectrum colors. There was nothing particularly ostentatious about the furnishings, but none-the-less, elegant. Rugs of velvety richness exuded warmth and hospitality, ornate tables of filigreed gold; chairs of ivory and bloodwood.

White-robed, dark-skinned servant boys moved efficiently about and in a manner that was almost theatrical.

There was something inegmatic about Ona and David. Ona was on the slender side, small in stature. A sprinkle of silver in her dark hair enhanced the lustre of her grey-green eyes. But there was neither line nor wrinkle to mar her exquisitely chiseled face.

Both Ona and David were of debatable age. I would not have dared to hazard a guess. Except for that vague something in the depths of Ona's eyes that suggesed a life well lived, she might easily have passed for a prematurely greying woman in her early thirties. But, when I thought about it later on, agelessness was a characteristic with all the Venusians. They seemed so youthfully alive.

David was a small, quiet man, not particularly outstanding in appearance, but a wealth of personality carried him through. David's hair, was beginning to grey around the temples, but like his lovely wife, his skin was alive and vital. Not a wrinkle to suggest his age, either.

I soon learned that science, too, had spread its wings of fancy here in this place. The greatest thinkers of earth down through the ages had failed to bring into creation even the commonplace miracles to be found on the Planet Venus, I was particularly impressed with the circular ships that looked like mystic moons that sped through the crystalline heavens. Our own giant clippers were mere fragile toys compared with their spectacular, rocket-shaped gondolas.

Nor were there any sprawling airports here, Only the „take-off” stations. ‘The ships rose straight up into the air until they reached great height, then travelled through space at a terrific speed.

David loved to talk about these sky ships for he had been more or less responsible for their creation. Just to sit in that cheery room, was an experience in luxury, I would never forget, nor would I ever forget our first meal in Ona and David’s home.

First, the white-robed boy served us with an amber colored irradiated liquid, not intoxicating in the usual sense, but intoxicating in a divine way.

I felt sorry for Cactus Jeff who tried so hard to express the gratitude in his heart. It seemed Jeff’s life had never been a bed of roses. He had met with tragedy, defeat and almost insurmountable handicaps all his life. Now to be treated with kindness ... to be admitted into the great heart of these wonderful people, completely overwhelmed him.

„It’s a mighty good feelin’ to be with real folks,” he said simply.

„White Man never knowing how much First People giving him,” Blue Cloud beamed, his pagan dignity showing. Blue Cloud had been taught in the Indian Kivas. He had sat at the feet of the wise ones. He had heard many times from their sage lips how the children of earth are born and reborn. How the road is always open back to the home of the Old First Ones.

„No one has a monopoly on happiness here,” David said graciously. „Happiness is to be found everywhere in

-the Great Universe, if one has but the patience to look for it.”

„People are golden in the depths of themselves, my friends,” Ona added softly. „In your own Holy Book it says ... ‘man is made in the image of God.’ Does that not mean that man possesses the ‘God Potential?’ Just as the flowers in the garden eventually burst into bloom, just so the soul of humanity will one day cast its waxen petals of gladness over the garden of the universe.”

„What a wonderful thought,” I exulted. „I must try to remember it, always.”

„To live vitally, one must think vitality,” David went on. „Life’s lessons are eventually learned in the mellowed experience of Time. But the laws of human adjustment, are simple, workable laws. It seems to us that you people of Earth always go out of your way to find means to abuse these laws. Harmony in the whole, demands harmony in the parts. Harmony is adjustment. We are a people, old in experience ... old in wisdom and knowing.”

I felt my eyebrows arch in an inquiring smile. „Do you think we will ever find your wonderful way of life?” I asked. „If we ever had the art of living, we certainly have lost it now.

A look of contemptuous pity came over Cactus Jeff’s face. His questioning was on the hostile side. „Even our big shots back home ain’t got it. If the big shots ain’t got it, how’s we little ‘ons goin’ to get it?” Blue Cloud agreed. His words were low and measured.

„White Man make first mistake when taking lands from Indians. First kill buffalo, then bring cattle. Kill beaver, build dams. Destroy warm nature, build cold cities.” It was apparent that Blue Cloud had an immense pride in his people, and to this day held a subconsciousness resentment for the wrongs that had been done them.

David smiled knowingly.

„In the vast reckoning of time, nothing is ever lost,” he said. „Every cause has its effect ... every effect its cause. Only in truth -is there freedom. To possess one must give. One needs only the fuel of human kindness, good will and tolerance to be happy. Here on Venus our spiritual fires are never permitted to burn at low ebb. It is the secret of our happiness and our success.”

Our interesting conversation was momentarily interrupted by the entrance of a very beautiful girl about five or six years old. She looked like a waxen fairy out of some fairytale book ... eyes blue as the skies ... skin fair as a lily, long golden curls that nestled in ringlets about her pretty head.

„This is our little Ley-sa,” Ona introduced. „She is our only offspring.”

„What a beautiful child,” I beamed. „Why she’s the most beautiful little girl I have ever seen.”

„Thank you, kind lady,” she returned in greeting. There was no pretense or affectation about it ... only simple gratitude.

How I wanted to take her in my arms and say: „You darling! You precious darling!

„Ain’t she the purtiest little thing you ever seen?” Jeff stuttered.

Blue Cloud beamed his pride as though she had been a little woman child from his home reservation.

But Ley-sa was an unusual little girl. Genuinely naive, she took all our compliments without embarrassment, for to her there was nothing of a personal nature implied. It was part of their way of life to be grateful to a higher source for all their bountiful treasures.

* * * *

Our first meal in this home was something we three looked forward ‘to, for we were hungry. The dining room was most charming.

Like the other rooms, the walls were decorated with interesting murals, pictorial scenes of breeze-tossed grain, agricultural progression at its height.

The drapes meant more to them than mere room ornamentation. They carried the rhythms of blended color ... a sort of therapeutic measure for the production of harmony and perfection within.

The oblong, hand-carved table had gold inlays at given intervals, and was covered with a cloth, fine as a cobweb, and hand-woven. The table was laid out for seven guests ... the family, Cactus Jeff, Blue Cloud, LeLando the charming, and myself.

Square plates of solid gold, with golden handle-less drinking urns all-purpose utility spoons, this seemed to comprise the table ware. I was naturally curious about the food. Would it consist only of ambrosial viands? Or were

we in for some good substantial eating? I was sure it would be the best, whatever it was.

As I glanced about I saw Cactus Jeff's mouth literally drooling. I hoped his inelegant manners would not be too revealing. But what a joy it was to be here in this haven of refuge away from the violence of our world.

The moment arrived at last. The white-robed boys placed a large basket of fruit upon the table. It was strange to us, but it did look luscious. I selected a specimen resembling a Luther-Burbank special ... a sort of cross between a peach and a pear, yet much larger, and tinted with vivid colorings. Cactus Jeff indulged in a cross between a summer squash and pomegranite, while Blue Cloud stayed as close as possible to the fruit of the giant Saguaro cactus.

Our teeth sinking into the fleshy meat brought forth the 'oh's' and 'ah's'.

„Ain't it the purtiest tastin' stuff you ever et?" Jeff gulped, the sugary juice running down his plaid shirt.

Blue Cloud ate noiselessly, but his facial expression revealed that his sense of taste went further than the mere pangs of hunger.

Ona and David smiled their appreciation.

„Our gardens are the best ... our soil rich and productive," David answered proudly. „Moreover, our food is enriched by charges of solar energy fed to the plant life. You see, here on Venus, physical energy is supplanted by solar power. On your earth plane, the isolation of the vitamin represents your first tottering steps in the evolution of food values."

I was struck with a thought.

„Why ... it's like manna from heaven, isn't it?"

„Perhaps you are closer to reality than you think,"
LeLando said.

David continued:

„In this atomic universe, there is but one supreme energy ... the energy of spirit. This secret we captured long ago. Here we harness and bend to use, the spiritual rays."

I turned a reflective face toward my host. I recalled my wonderful mother who always had asked blessings on our food before each meal. 'It puts God into the food,' she had said. God was certainly in the heavenly food being served at Ona and Davids table.

„My dear," Ona confided. „Some day your own scientific men will make this same discovery. The spiral is ever onward and upward though at times it would appear to be running in reverse."

„And," David added you were all hungry. Hunger creates its own appreciation."

Cactus Ieff had his word.

„Back yonder when I furst went to prospectin' the skunks an' the field rats was allus a-stealin' my grub. Sometimes had to even kill me a jackrabbit for my supper. Mebbe you don't think them fried beans an' bakin' warn't good next time I laid me in a supply."

Blue Cloud's full resolute mouth broke into a smile.

„Indian knowing too much about Old Woman Nature to be hungry.” But it was obvious, nevertheless, Blue Cloud was genuinely grateful.

The first course over, the white-robed boys again made their appearance, this time with a huge, terra-cotta vessel of steaming hot soup. Made from exotic vegetables and special herbs, it contained no meat. But it was delicious.

Following the soup course came an entree of wild fowl, delightfully cooked in spices and oils. On the side, a large platter of mixed vegetables. Tea, brewed from native herbs served as a beverage. It was a simple meal, but the most palatable one I ever tasted.

The conversation around the dinner table gave us still more insight into the way of life of these interesting people.

„Here on Venus we have a maternal form of government,” David informed. „Under the guiding hand of our wonderful Queen Zo-na, we have known only fair and equitable rule. You see ... human ills are ever the outgrowth of human conflict. Here we do not try to compete. We find it more profitable to co-operate. As a consequence we have no poverty ... and virtually no bodily ailments.

„You mean you ain’t got no poor people?” Cactus Jeff asked wide-eyed.

„Poverty is sinful,” David returned. „Poverty robs the individual of his own inherent freedom. Where one person must parasite upon another there is always bondage.”

„Poverty leads ever to mendicancy,” LeLando added ... „first in the individual ... ultimately in the nation and in time the whole planet. It is this sort of impoverishment that leads to earthly wars.

Here we do not know the meaning of war.”

„But surely you have the less fortunate classes,” I said, still incredulous.

„Wealth to be sure, is on varying levels,” LeLando explained. But there we never prate about our Constitutional Rights. We *live* the Principle.”

„But the workers ... you must have people who work.” I went on.

„Workers to be sure, but not inferiors,” David informed. „Capital and labor is adjusted to the amicable agreement of both. Capital has its adequate profits. Labor has its correspondingly proper wages. Our workers all enjoy comfortable living. We have housing projects where needed. Homes designed and built by the government. Lease- holds and rentals are nominal. Here we know only one charity ... the correction of any possible misfortune. We have one economy ... the honest distribution of goods. Where equitable rule abides, this is not at all difficult. One groups assumes responsibility willingly ... the other fits into that responsibility without jealousy or malice.”

Blue Cloud had a thought.

„Before White Man coming,” he prated proudly. „Indians at Big East Water having that too. All tribes happy together.” Blue Cloud was referring to that document that bound together in friendship, fellowship

and peace, the Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onandagas, the Cayogas and the Senacas. This confederation of the Iroquois tribes furnished the very roots of our own American Constitution. But I was not interested in drawing comparisons now. I was avid for knowledge.

„Even greatness cannot run indefinitely in the same grooves,” I contended. „What about changes? On earth we have our ups and downs. Our good times and our depressions. What do you have for contrast?”

„Changes come in their own good time,” David explained. „Eventually customs are outworn. Cultures outdated. But there is never cause to resort to violence when changes are eminent. Here we have what we call Institutions of Progress. We are constantly at work preparing in advance for all eventualities to come. We never try to cling to the *status quo* of things.”

I waxed vociferous:

„Now I do believe I’ve been dreaming. This is the Shangri-La you read about in novels.”

„Even a Shangri-La can grow stale and uninteresting,” LeLando broke in. „The secret of greatness lies in creation. The continuance of new ideas. Here we constantly put into practice new methods of growth. This keeps life exhilarating.”

Ona, who held an important place in the Bureau of Education, felt qualified to voice her views on the subject.

„Our schools and universities are the best,” she said. „We teach everything from the healing arts to menial household tasks. But more important -than all we train

individual intuition. We can tune in accurately on all minds, everywhere. You see, mind speaks a universal language that is easily translated into a common tongue. Too, it is from the realm of intuition that all new ideas are born. Intuitive training is vital training. This opens the channels of telepathic interplay not only between all planets, but the upper worlds of spirit, as well."

My curiosity was genuinely aroused now.

"You mean you actually depend upon intuitional guidance? On your hunches?"

"The mind properly trained in its intuitions, is infallible," Ona returned.

Blue Cloud acquiesced, for this clear light of the awakened consciousness had been taught him in the Kiva.

"Indian always knowing what happening tomorrow," he said.

"That's what I calls lettin' Ol' ma Nature learn yeh, Cactus Jeff chuckled. „Fact is ... jes' how I come on to the Old Mother Lode. I was a-sittin' by my fyre one night ... waitin' for my beans to boil. An' sure as shootin' stars ... I heated somebody say ..."

"Cactus ... you ain't a gettin' no place. That's gold in them that hills ... and lead too. An' I ain't hoofin' no devil round the stump, neither.' So ... I gets me a burro and packs in. It was kinda wild like. Waren't nobody that for more'n forty year. But sure as Ol' Billy Cain ... I found me some outcrop and went to diggin'."

I hushed Cactus with a severe glare. I knew if I didn't stop him he would take up the whole evening talking

about his mine. „Please go on dear,” I begged of Ona. „It is so very interesting.” „There is something else you will be interested in,” she said. „The true meaning of sex equality. We have no jealousies between the sexes here. One sex does not infringe on the rights of the other. The gentler arts are taught by women. The women take care of the moral training of the youth of our land.”

Then, thinking she had contributed a goodly share of the dinner discussion, Ona turned the subject of their way of life over to her husband again. David’s field was science and invention. In fact he was in charge of the Bureau of Inventions.

„You are probably most interested in our mode of travel,” he went on. „Our terra-van, used in short distance travel is not too unlike your motor car. The aqua-van is used for outings on our water-ways. The atmos-van is equipped with retractable rudder and landing gear. This ship will one day land upon your Planet Earth. All are fueled by solar radiation. Solar power is used for heating and lighting also. While we know little about serious illness, no plagues or pestilences, we do, if occasion arises use solar radiation for the healing of bodily ills. Solar rays are directed through the ailing parts, the sickness driven out without harming organ or tissue.”

LeLando, who was connected with the Institution of Laws, added his little bit.

„Our laws here are simple laws,” he said. „We have no crime in a land of peace and plenty.”

„You mean you do not even maintain a police force?” I asked incredulously.

„That is correct,” he returned. „Our laws are enacted for the benefit of all. One wrong does not compensate for another wrong. We have our limitations, of course. But we also know our capabilities. Dominant individuals set the examples. They are our patterns.

Our statesmen inspire us with hope and faith. It is the duty of the law-makers to see that ‘the virtues of living are carried out to ‘the full- est.” LeLando ‘hesitated a moment, a smile on his face: „Let me put it this way,” He went on finally. „We liken life to Mistress Cow. She must be milked each day and the milk consumed while it is fresh and sweet. Otherwise it would clabber and go sour. That is the way with life. We must keep it sweet else it goes sour. It is up to us.”

The interesting conversation drawing to a close, one of the white-robed boys slipped quietly into the room, ‘turned a dial on an instrument that somewhat resembled our radio. In a moment the room was flooded with soft, soothing music, matched with streams of vivid color. It was like the Aurora Borealis tuned to „the harmony of the human voice. Soon the vibration of the room was raised until it fairly scintillated with a „transcendant pulsation.

„Music is the same on all planets,” Ona said as she led the way to the music room where she took her place before a large massive instrument somewhat like a piano. It was their custom to have an hour of music before retiring.

The time came finally for Ona to show me to my lovely suite of rooms ... a charming sitting room ... a sleeping chamber ... a writing room and bath. It was

indeed a sanctuary of peace. I fairly leaped with joy when I saw it.

„Ona, you darling,” I cried out jubilantly. „It’s simply heavenly.”

You wonderful people of Venus have turned my whole world into one beautiful song.”

Ona smiled her thanks. „Your heart is overflowing, my dear. It is perhaps the first time you have ever experienced the complete full- ness of life. One is never free unless one’s soul is free. You must remember that always. Good night my dear, and joyful dreams.” „Good night, Ona,” I said with genuine thanks in my heart. „I do love you and your wonderful land.”

Following a few hurried toiletries I leaped into bed. What a joy it was to stretch my body once more. I knew I was to enjoy every moment of rest on this heavenly couch. With the perfumed night air caressing me, I fell asleep.

3.

The sun casting sovereign rays across my face, awakened me. My thought flew instantly to LeLando. He was such a charming person. His tantalizing blue eyes still haunted me. The movie Romeos back home had never even come close to possessing either the physical attributes or the commanding personality of this unusual man from Venus.

A strange attraction had existed from the moment of our meeting. Was it the gestation of love in my heart? I didn't quite know. It was difficult to discern where the personal began and the impersonal left off.

LeLando had done everything possible to make us comfortable and "happy. He had brought us into rapport with Ona and David, two people I would never, never forget. But why was I here? Why had I come to Venus in the first place? And my two alien companions, Cactus Jeff and Blue Cloud. Could it be 'that now and then an earth being is given the opportunity to go on soul flights to other planets? Our own world was in the dangerous depths of physical and psychological bondage. Certainly something could be learned from these Venusians. They had a grander scale of living than we knew anything about. To think that they transferred physical energy to solar power! They used music blended with color to quiet the nerves before retiring. They excelled in farming and agriculture. If these changes could come on earth, human beings would be lifted to a new octave.

These people of Venus had established a perfect form of government. Their schools were the best. Their students were taught in the use of 'first principles.' They knew how to tune in on knowledge rather than going through the long tedious method of cluttering the mind with useless detail. They enjoyed true equality of the sexes. They had sovereign leadership. And so on.

How I loved the feel of the silken sheets next to my body. But I knew I must be arising. I gave one last stretch then bounded out of bed. Too, I was anxious to get into the lovely garden. Already the sunlight on the dew was

like so many sparkling facets of a diamond. The flowers, buried under the webby wetness looked up at me as if to say: "Won't you please come out and release us?"

And breakfast! What would they be having for breakfast? Would it be eggs, hotcakes, or waffles? But Ley-sa broke in on my reverie.

„Good moning Earth Lady,” she greeted warmly.

„Good morning, darling. How are you?” I answered back.

„I am happy, thank you. I hope you are happy, too.”

„I'm so happy I can't believe it's real, Ley-sa,” I said. “I'm the happiest person alive I do believe.”

* * * *

Breakfast proved to be another simple meal, consisting of fruit, a delicious grain cereal and herb tea. It was quite enough, too.

“We have planned a sight-seeing trip for you today,” David informed. “Ley-sa will go with you to point out the places of interest. Gunga will guide the terra-van.” Gunga was one of the dark-skinned boys.

I was beside myself with joy.

„We're going sight-seeing in a terra-van,” I called to Cactus Jeff and Blue Cloud.

„What a story we'll have when we get back home.”

Jeff Stringfeller's small tired eyes famed up with a new light. The far hills in the distance and their likely beds of treasure still haunted him. Perhaps he might stake out a claim. Blue Cloud was happy 'too, for the Indian

wanted to see more of this land from which his forebears had come. Perhaps he had inherited from these ancestors his traits of stoicism and patience. Blue Cloud knew that the rugged mountains concealed many secrets. He had been told of the sacred fire that had never been extinguished. Of the light that had burned since the beginning of time. Blue Cloud believed that one form is transmuted into other forms; that human beings are only symbols wearing the robes of earth. Would he find it all here on Venus?

„Running through the tapestry of life are many patterns,” David said, as if he had read Blue Cloud’s mind. As humanity goes forward, the fabric of the past must be woven into the fabric of present. That is ... life is forever recapitulated on varying planes.”

He pointed to the mountains ‘through the translucent windows. „Those old hills have stood, mute evidence of their impregnability,” he went on. „They love the silence and the solitude. They fear the day when the fury of the clouds will come again. When the shape of things will be changed once more. Behind all of nature’s ‘grandeur; beneath the spreading vales, can be found the ruins and the curse of every civilization. Cultures lie buried, but eventually the archeologist’s spade makes ‘them whole again. Everything new must contain the essence of the old, for both preserve: and destroyer is forever with us.”

Blue Cloud spoke up next.

„My father, him Navajo chief. He very wise. He telling Blue Cloud about Before People who came before the floods. Long time ago; Indians good people, but soon learning to do bad. Make ‘Great Mystery’ mad. Him

sending floods. North Wind help punish bad peoples. Him bring ice and snow. Then too cold for living. No animals. No man. Cloud People wanting come back home. 'Great Mystery' melting ice for good people. Change them back to man. Land get green again. Great Ones put animals on earth. Fish in rivers. Everything to eating. Long time Indian happy. Then White Man, he come."

Cactus Jeff's eyes snapped fire:

„It was a dirty, low down trick," he grumpled ... „a-takin' Indian lands."

„My father wise," Blue Cloud interrupted. „He telling Navajos, Indians got to pay for Old People's badness. When Indians debt well paid, Morning Star People come again. Then everything all right."

I was beginning to piece things together. Perhaps our Indian anthropologies were not far wrong. Neither were the Indian myths and legends. The long history of man was preserved in these charming nature dramas, There had been many dissenting minds regarding the origin of the Indian, but perhaps his own intuitions were more accurate than any of the White Man's beliefs.

The discourse was ended again as Gunga announced that the terra-van was waiting.

4.

We were a strange three-some from earth, now comfortably esconsed in the luxurious terra-van, and on our way. Ley-sa was expounding the grand virtues of their wonderful Queen Zo-na ... sovereign ruler over this land of magic.

„It's hard to believe you would have a Queen ruling over Venus, rather than a President,” I told her.

I watched Ley-sa's eyes grow wide with wonderment.

„Why ... it is the maternal principle,” she returned. „Our Queen Zo-na is very wise. She rules not with power, but with a wand of wisdom.”

„So! At last we have a woman's world somewhere,” I replied, trying to be a bit humorous. But Ley-sa was very serious.

„The Mother Principle is gentle,” she returned. “Our Queen has done so much for her subjects.”

"I apologize, Ley-sa," I returned ashamed of myself. „Of course. Why, even on earth we have many famous women.”

Cactus Jeff who had only revered women from afar, was all for it.

„Thar wouldn't never be no wars, By Gum ... if the ladies, God bless 'em, wore the country's breeches,” he bragged.

Blue Cloud smiled his approval, too.

„Indian womans turning back on fire. When everything turning all right again, she turn front some more.”

„Would you like to hear more about our Queen?” the little girl asked.

I’d adore it Ley-sa,” I replied.

„I’m sure the boys would, too.”

We were all overwhelmed by this adorable bit of childish femininity, her sweet beauty, and sage mind.

„Many centuries ago,” she began, „we had a King upon the throne. He was a wicked King, He was power-seeking and cruel. Much evil was in our land. The people were sad.

They suffered very much. Then one day the King sickened and died. Queen Zo-na came to us. She was merciful and kind. She soon restored the peace. Injustices were healed. The people didn’t hate each other any more.”

Cactus Jeff, anxious for a word, butted in,

‘I reckon it took a lotta queens to get you outta that fix.”

Ley-sa looked at him in amazement.

„There has been but one Queen Zo-na, She has ruled over us these many centuries. She is a most remarkable woman.”

My mouth flew open. I’m sure my eyes were popping.

„Am I dreaming, Ley-sa? You say ... it was centuries ago, ... and she is still alive?”

Now Ley-sa was bewildered. Questioning or doubting was something she did not comprehend.

„Yes, to be sure. It was centuries ago,” she said at length. But what are centuries, dear friends from earth, in the long calendar of time? Do not your own great ones live on ... if not in earthly bodies, in memory?”

I apologized again. What could I say to this?

Cactus Jeff came out of his stupor, breaking loose with a chuckle.

„I'm a dreamin' too,” he said.”

„Thar aint' nobody what can live that long.”

„Our Queen is no longer young and beautiful,” Ley-sa went on.

„It is only because she has willed it so. Is that so very unusual?”

She looked from one to the other for her answer.

„It is indeed, Ley-sa dear,” I replied. „We put limitations upon our life span on earth. We seldom live beyond that time.”

„You see,” she went on, „here on Venus we are taught the Principles of immortality. We live very long indeed.”

Cactus Jeff's eyes were popping now.

He started to say something, then stopped suddenly.

He didn't want to confuse the child. Perhaps she wouldn't go on with her story.

„Tell us all about it, dear,” I coaxed. „Tell it in your own sweet way. We are all interested. Perhaps ... well, maybe even you are not a child?”

„Oh yes. Children never choose their own destinies as children,” she explained. „Only when I’m grown shall I decide how long I wish to remain in this body.”

„Well, I’ll be dogged,” Cactus exploded. „Of Billy Cain hisself couldn’t figger that one out. These folks even know when the Ol Man is a-comin’ with his ‘sy.’”

I was thoughtful a moment. Why should we question the way of life of these people? They certainly excelled in every other field of endeavor. It was entirely possible they had unlocked the door to nature’s secrets of longevity, too.”

„You mean, Ley-sa,” I continued when you reach the age of decision you will be able to remain young and beautiful indefinitely? That is ... if you so will it?”

„That would be indulging in vanity,” she returned, chagrined at the thought. „We remain young only when we have a greater service to render.”

Again, I saw that my approach had been all wrong.

„Please go on Leysa,” I begged. „Tell us mote about your Queen Zo-na.” „Does she use some scientific formula? Is that it, dear? You see, it’s all so new to us.”

„We do not know the exact age years of our Queen,” Ley-sa continued. „For many centuries she retained her youth and great beauty. She is said to have been the fairest of all the women who have ever lived. She had everything with which to enhance her beauty. The richest of raiment. The costliest of gems. She had many lovers, too. And numerous husbands. She outlived them all.”

My mind was pregnant with a question for I was beginning to view Queen Zo-na as the pattern of magnificent luxury. A symbol, rather than a person.

„Have you also found the answer to the ills of humanity?” I asked.

„Where beauty matches beauty, there can be no ugliness ... therefore there can be no human ills,” she replied.

I was beginning to understand at last. Where beauty reigned supreme there could be no ugliness, of course. That was one of the errors of our earth plane. There we had too much that was ugly. We had luxury of a sort, but it was a decadent luxury. This was one of our growing evils. A very dangerous evil.

Ley-sa tuned in on my thoughts.

„It isn't beauty that is at the root of evil,” she said. „It is the abuse of beauty. You have your rich and your poor. You have the educated and the ignorant. The rich can purchase their beauty. The poor risks life trying to gain it.”

„Yes, I am beginning to see it, Ley-sa,” I said abstractedly. „It looks to me like we've got a big job ahead of us, improving the lot of our mankind.”

Blue Cloud bit his lips until they bled. He seemed always to be carrying a sore heart for his people.

„Indian having new name for Reservation,” he said the irony showing in his voice. „He calling it Concentration Camp.”

The wise little girl saw harmony slipping off balance, so she quickly turned our attention to the scenery. The terra-van was now climbing a mountain road where nature's grandeur was at its best.

But my curiosity had not been satisfied. It seemed incredible that one human being could live on for centuries. Yet, I did not doubt Ley-sa's word.

„I just can't get over the miracle of your Queen,” I said.

„Our land was sad,” she repeated again. „Our Queen had much to do. One lifetime was not enough. She prayed to the Superior Intelligence for guidance. The mystery of longevity was revealed to her in a dream.”

„Is it something she eats? Something she drinks? Or what?”

„No, Miss Dana. Life years here on Venus are governed and controlled by means of radiation. Queen Zo-na kept her youthful appearance until such time as she grew tired of remaining young. Then slowly, she released the age years. Her hair began to turn grey. Her body weight increased. Then one day we saw her as a mature woman. Again she halted -the ray for more than another century of time. She wanted her subjects to gain their own values. To be self-sufficient unto themselves. Then the time came to let go of more years. Today our Queen is an elderly woman. Her hair is very white. Her face carries wrinkles. Our wise ones tell us that our Queen will soon surrender her fleshly body to the forces of dissolution.”

„That’s what I allus been a’sayin,” Jeff broke in. „You jes can’t keep the good things ... and the bad things is jes’ like field mice ... allus a-leavin’ their dirt.”

I countered with a bit of my own philosophy.

„The good wouldn’t stay good very long by contrast,” I said.

„It’s like sleep. It is necessary to refresh -the body ... but it takes the long sleep of death to refresh the soul.”

Ley-sa smiled her assent.

"Now what of Ona and David?" I asked. „Are they your real parents?"

„Oh yes. I am their only offspring,” she replied innocently.

„And may I ask something very personal? Something you need not answer if you think better of it?"

„We do not harbor secrets on Venus,” she replied.

„All right, dear ... then how about Ona and David? How old, I mean?"

„Ona, my mother is nearing a century mark,” the little girl replied without even a flicker of an eyelash. „David, my father, has passed two centuries of time.”

„You *mean* there is more than a hundred years of difference in their ages? And *you* are *their* child? Why ... it’s utterly incredulous.”

„Well ... I’ll be hoofin’ the devil ’round a stomp,” Cactus shouted, waving his hands, -then slapping at his knees. "Whatta man he be. Whatta man.”

„Don't forget Ona,” I smiled. „She's a remarkable one too. I'm afraid, Ley-sa darling ... you just about have us all dizzy.”

„Are you amused?” she asked, still not quite comprehending.

„Holy Makral!” Cactus expostulated. „That's the funniest thing what I ever heered.”

„My mother and sire are very wise,” she answered.

„Wise as Ol' Solomon hisself,” Cactus hollered, releasing another belly laugh.

I chided him severely:

„Where are your manners, Jeff? Stop it ... this minute,” I yelled.

Cactus' face reddened, and when he calmed down he was genuinely contrite.

„I ain't aimin' to be rude,” he apologized. „I just can't help it. Now I'm a-thinking' of that putty feller. Landy ... or whatever his name is. Mebbe he's a grandpappy too. Mebbe he's an ol' feller only his whiskers ain't showin.”

Jeff's crude words went through me like the point of a sword. But he was right. Perhaps LeLando was an old man. Maybe a hundred or more. I wondered for a moment, just how I would feel about him should he suddenly change his immortal garb for the attire of mortal man? For to me, these Venusians all seemed immortal.

„Mebbe the putty feller's as old as Methusula ... or whoever he was ... Jeff unwittingly taunted.

Blue Cloud, sensing my feelings, came to my rescue:

„Wise man living long time. Man not wise, dying young.”

But my soul was in torment. I was concerned even though I knew it shouldn't make any difference to me. I couldn't dismiss the thought from my mind. This handsome LeLando was there inside of me. He was closer than breath itself. I could see that high, intellectual brow ... his slightly Oriental appearance and blondish hair and blue eyes. Yes ... LeLando had opened the door to my soul. I would never, never forget him. He would be there in my heart tomorrow, and through all the tomorrow's to come. From him I would learn of life ... and of love.”

Gunga, was now guiding the terra-van at a low rate of speed. We were on an upgrade still, and looking backward it was a sight we behold. Natural beauty such as our earth-plane had never dreamed about.

Many terra-vans had passed us by, and the flying discs over head were like dozens of whirling silver wheels.

My mind flew back to my world. It was quite apparent that despite our feelings of grandeur, all the standards of excellence were not wrapped up in earthly achievements. The vision of humanity on earth was dimming because our people had not looked I their world through the eyes of their souls. Not that people should become puppets, dangling from some spiritual cord-string, but I knew now that human inadequacies can always be remedied if one's erring footsteps could only be turned to more lofty levels.

For moments I gazed in silence out into God's magnificence.

His promise was there written in the mountains; it was written in the seas; it blew with the wind-washed air; it was in the heart of the storms, and the core of the calm. God's promise was the music and the fragrance in the flowers. It was there in every inch of the winding road leading us now toward the sun-kissed crags above the magic city on the Planet Venus.

It was a gorgeous day, and the light breeze was refreshing. Gunga opened up the windows of the terravan so that it seemed to me that the heart throb of nature, and my own heart throb met in the center of harmony and love.

Suddenly a massive, golden dome appeared silhouetted against the sunlit sky.

„What is that Ley-sa?“ I asked excitedly.

„It is the Temple of Venus,“ the little girl answered.

„LeLando's sire is our beloved High Priest. I am sure LeLando will be overjoyed to escort you to a service in our Temple.“

Now I was surging with a feeling I could not define.

„The Temple of Venus is immortal,“ she went on. „It can never be destroyed for it has been decreed that it shall live throughout Eternity. Should our planet change its face many times, the temple will remain forever.“

We returned to Ona and David's home over another beautiful road. Here we had the advantage of seeing the broad vista of this crescent city of greatness at its best.

5.

A few days later, LeLando took me to the Temple of Venus high on the mountain-top. It was even more majestic than anything I had anticipated in my wildest dreams. Flights of ascending red granite steps led up to the great tabernacle. Supporting peristyles held huge marble pillars. The magnificence of the Temple of Venus had never been duplicated in the long histories of man. As Ley-sa had said, it was an edifice built to survive, not for a few centuries, but forever.

I wanted to describe it, even to myself, but mortal words would only defile its beauty. A deep, reverent awe consumed me and I asked LeLando's permission to be alone for a few moments, I wanted to realize fully, the sense of completeness it gave me.

Standing aloft on the wide terrace overlooking the magical city, as far as my eye could envision I beheld only beautiful splendor. Palatial homes comingled with horney little cottages scattered over the green-clad hills. The shimmering, iridescent roofs seemed to dance in the radiant atmosphere. And the gardens! Only master gardeners could have planned it all, and then only under the guiding hand of the Master of them All.

I turned to LeLando in exultation:

„I'm sure this is the happiest day of my life, LeLando," I breathed ecstatically.

„I too am happy this day," he replied ... the rich mellowness of his voice touching a responding chord in my heart.

„If it could only last forever,” I said wistfully.

Our conversation was soon swallowed up by the strains of heavenly music coming through the breezes ... music that seemed it capture all the natural rhythms of the universe at once.

A great ecstasy seized me, as LeLando led me through the marble doors into the temple celestial. A richly robed usher came forward to greet us ... then lead us to our places. The auditorium was already well filled with people.

It was like an amphitheatre, the seats rising in tiers one above the other. They were of hand-carved bloodwood, and luxuriously cushioned with a rich, azure blue material. Each carried its own mystic symbols.

From the center of the auditorium a snowy white altar rose up, ornated by a massive golden cross. The lower part of the cross resembled somewhat our Christian cross, the upper part a circle. On one side of the altar stood a large, seven-branched candle stick surrounded by statues and statuettes of pure gold. Lighted censers exhaled the balmy aroma of frankincense that seemed to blend harmoniously with the faint wisps of smoke drifting in from the permanent altar in the rear. Before the smaller altar the sacred fire burned. Here the eternal light would flame throughout all the days and nights of time.

The women were seated on one side of the auditorium; the men on the other. I wanted so much to sit beside LeLando, but since this was their custom, who was I, a stranger from another planet, to violate it.

Without doubt it was the handsomest aggregate of the human family I had ever seen assembled together. The men were clean shaven, and oddly enough they were dressed very much like the women. They wore rich robes of deep purple, their heads bedecked in togas. The women wore long white robes with flowing veils on their heads.

To me, it seemed I had been taken by the warm hand of immortality. The peace I felt within, was boundless. But ... what did it have to do with my own destiny? Would there in the end by some great mystery to unravel? Something vital to be gained? Just to think about all this fabulous wealth was staggering. To be inside this massive structure of glory made me feel as rich as Midas himself.

The music was heavenly. Angelic harps could not have evoked harmonies more exquisite. Finally a door opened from the rear of the altar, admitting four young boys, attired in altar robes. An older man followed. He was somewhat taller than the men I had seen on Venus, but he had the kindest face I have ever seen. A high, intellectual forehead helped to glorify his dark, luminous eyes, framed in a smooth, unlined face. He, too, was slightly olive-skinned, but his appearance was soon lost in his commanding personality. Every eye was focused upon him. Every mind was concentrated at attention. This man seemed positively omniscient, standing there in his azure robe embroidered in golden symbols.

As the musical prelude came to a close, the temple was as still as a silent night. Out of the silence came the resonant notes of his perfectly modulated voice.

„Dear Ones ... People of our Planet Venus. We have with us tonight a messenger from the Planet Earth. She has come to be taught in our schools of wisdom, to learn more about us, and our way of life. When she returns again to her own world, she will have been immersed in our high ideals. These treasures she will store away in her heart to be passed along as occasion wills.

As we, the inhabitants of Venus all know, the plan of the earth plane has changed many times since our own day of glory began. Ours is the basis of all new foundations. We know too, that the civilizations that come and go, pass from planet to planet in their upward progression. Some day the Planet Earth will inherit the glories known to us through these many eons of time. Neither the storms nor the strife of life can obliterate tradition's bountiful goodness.

Though oceans may flow over the land ... new forms may be molded from the old ... races may follow races, still throughout the great span of time histories remain written in the vermillion hills ... in the suns and in the stars.

On the earth plane, the centuries have been buried in cycles, leaving behind the ruins of cataclysmic upheavals. But through all the winding centuries, our Temple of Venus ... our own holy of holies, has stood.

The history of races is the history of unbroken lines. There is always the way back ... the lamps of tradition to light the way. Individuals and nations alike are swept into the channel of their own destiny. Though continents pass away, customs change, cultures fade into antiquities, still the archetypal pattern remains forever the same.

Child of Earth, let me say that histories are written in your own Book of Remembrance. They are etched into the indestructible ethers there to be read by the prophets of destiny, Behold! Before the judgment seat of God, the faltering trend of progress is ever aspiring toward the lofty altars above.

„You will find the human dramas of life preserved in myth and legend. You will find them inscribed on the tablets and scrolls. Nature’s imprimitur is to be found in the rocks and the sands, written there to be discovered perhaps eons later. Each rising civilization must gain its own knowledge ... its own wisdom, yet it must ever draw its pattern from the civilizations that have passed. When the clay of resurrection comes greatness will -be buried beneath dust and wave alike. It will be there to be found again because it has never been lost.

In the broad sense of life on all planets, upheavals and cataclysms are nature’s way of cleansing away the unwanted. Old forms give way to new. Eventually each is brought into harmony with the other by means of unfoldment.

Remember, Child of Earth, that the treasures planted on one planet in one given age, are eventually reaped on other planets in the ages to come. In the days ahead the Planet Earth will draw her bountiful beauties from us, for as you have already learned, ‘beauty’ is the keynote of this land of love.

Your day of glory will come. The land known as America will live in richness and splendor. She will be inspired in the patterns of God’s highest creations.

That you might not be misled ... as our people here know ... we too had our rise and our fall. But so long as our hearts remain linked in brotherhood, never again shall we suffer that injustice. So long as we remain firm in fellowship, we shall never have in our midst, selfishness or greed. Our values, rooted in love, shall never know malice nor be subjected to ignoble acts. Since we of Venus live our laws in the highest, we have no laws to be obeyed.

Only this, our planet Venus, has known the fullness of perfection. But, step by step each and every planet in the broad universal system must climb the golden stairs. Child of Earth ... your own America is the hope of your planet. She shall rise to her greatness, a haven for all who seek rest. With the coming of the New Dispensation, America the land that has housed so many races, shall rise. Her banner of freedom shall wave in all its glory. Child of Earth ... we welcome you to our Planet Venus. Venus ... the planet of beauty and love.”

6.

The message meant for me was still ringing in my ears hours after LeLando left me at Ona and David's home ... and I had retired for another night of heavenly rest. This ‘grand man’ from the Temple of Venus had told me that there was actually hope in our despairing world. That the children of earth would not be forgotten.

I was filled with a feeling of glorious security to know that in times of trouble and stress a glad hand would

always be extended from our faraway neighbors in the sky. This hand would lead us to the banquet table of life's higher ideals.

My short stay on Venus had convinced me that when God first made the world His concept of perfection was conceived in all its glory. In God's divine citadel located in -the heart of the universe, the tired worlds would always find rest. It was here the soul-deadened were inspired to new hope. When spiritual lights burn dim here are other worlds and newer realizations to be found. In other words, there would always be a Heaven ... perhaps there would always be an Earth. There would always be the Solar System ... the planets and the galaxies of stars. By the same token, somewhere in the vast universe there would be a waste and a void. There would be light to contrast the darkness. At the close of each century the scrolls are gathered up and filed away for the scrutiny and use of the century to be ushered in.

In the vast scheme of things achievements are never long lost. That which has been once accomplished can be done again. On the earth plane, it seemed to be the pattern of destiny that we should learn the hard way. By trial and error. Through tribulation and sorrow. But when life's lessons are eventually learned and the time comes for the larger gains, it is ever the prophet who leads the way. It is the pioneers who blast 'the rocks and stones from the pathway.

My land! My America! How she had warmed the blankets for all her babes. When children from other nations had been deprived of life and liberty, she had tried to house them all. In peace or in war, America was

truly the 'land of the free and the home of the brave'. My mind dwelt a moment on these wonderful Venusians. How much further advanced they were. But ... true enough, there were straws in the wind back home. Our world was turning with hope toward the cornerstones of science. Eventually our scientists would triumph completely over the solids, the liquids, the gases. Our physicists would conquer the plasms of space. Science and invention would continue to expand to meet all the growing need.

These people on Venus had achieved in all realms, while we were still suffering needlessly at the hands of ignorance. But one of these days travailing humanity would find its way out.

Again, the sun was coming up over the enchanting hills. It was morning. Another day in this wonderful land. How many more such *days* would there be for me, I wondered. Yet ... they were not days in reality time was only *my* conception ... *my* measuring rod.

7.

In the days that followed I soon found that 'paradise' is always where 'love' is. I was madly, rapturously in love. Love was my whole existence now, but unlike our planet earth everything was working out in a tranquilly beautiful way. There were no jarring discords to mar the ecstasy of our wonderful companionship.

From the very first there had been a strange attraction between us. Poor Stephen! How quickly he was forgotten

when LeLando came. I was sure now that I had never really loved Stephen. I knew there would never be but one love like this. The many blissful hours spent together in the fern arbor of Ona and David's garden, had wooed our love into the fullness of bloom. We were complete when we were together ... there was a sensitivity to the vibration that entwined us with beauty like the flowers that grew all around us. We each saw in the other, the splendor of life supreme.

Again in our usual trysting place, LeLando took my hand in his.

„I love you truly, my dear,” he said with reverence. And I loved him quite as truly. At last I had found all the idealistic qualities that love embraced. In LeLando I had found something that could never be taken from me.

„If it could only last as it is now,” I sighed wistfully, „If only I could stay here forever.”

„When the spirit is wedded there can never be any separation,” his resonant voice answered back.

Of course I jumped to my own conclusions.

„I can stay here! You do mean I can stay,” don't you I beseeched.

But it was only for a fleeting moment. Again I was back with my fears.

„It's so like a dream LeLando,” I said. „I'm afraid any moment I'll wake up and find that none of this is true.”

„Dreams, my love ... are born in the mansions of the soul,” he said. „Dreams are immortal. In every love there is one supreme moment, he intoned.” „A moment when

flesh and spirit meet. In this moment great changes come. All great changes come in love, for love is the light of the soul.”

I knew LeLando was hiding something behind his veiled words, Something I tried to comprehend, but couldn't quite grasp. I knew that I was face to face with that age-long conflict of duty over love. I was beginning to believe that no human being in the vast span of time had ever known a greater love. But the urge toward duty was equally as profound.

„That word ‘duty.’ I had heard it from the lips of the High Priest. I had heard it from Ona and David. I had heard it so often from the heart of LeLando. I wanted to be fair with myself. How infinitesimal should be my own personal happiness compared with this greater duty. Of course I was being a martyr, but the line of history was dotted with martyrs.

My desires were transcendent, but I was aware of the fact I could never touch the fringe of the Venusians spiritual development. They lived in horizons above and beyond.

I had pondered the thought many times ... why had I been chosen as an emissary of hope? It would be a thankless job, at best. Why had it not been Cactus Jeff or the stalwart Blue Cloud? Of course, when I faced the issue honestly the answer was plain enough. Cactus Jeff would be accused of moon madness or something worse if he tried to tell the world about Venus. Blue Cloud too, would be shouted down. He was an Indian, and Indians were often spinners of yarns. I knew I would never be believed by the masses, but even if I succeeded in

making a few comprehend, my visit to this faraway planet would not have been in vain.

I turned a tear-stained face toward LeLando.

„I’m so unworthy,” I said. „Always thinking of myself. But” ... I added hesitantly, „maybe it would be different if I thought I could do the people of earth some good. I know them, Many will scoff and jeer. The few I might succeed in impressing will soon forget all about it. It’s the way of our world, LeLando. Here it is all so different.”

His arm went around my waist tenderly. The very depths of his vision seemed transferred to mine.

„There is a bit of gold in every heart,” my fairest,” he said. „You sometimes have to go deep to find it, to be sure. The people of your world are young in understanding. You must be tolerant. They have suffered much, they have learned little. There is much selfishness in their hearts. Often they are cloaked in their smug conceits. They do not understand the better way of life as you have seen it lived in our land. It is your duty to teach them how to hunger for the best.”

„But it’s like dropping little drops of fresh water in a stagnant pool,” I argued. „My little bit of leaven couldn’t extend very far.”

LeLando held me very close.

„It is not our wish that you should sacrifice yourself on the altar of the world,” my dearest. „But you must feel the responsibility of your duty. Perform your task with honesty and good grace. That is all we ask of you.”

„But,” I argued, „I still maintain it will be useless effort expended. I know it.”

LeLando’s honest stare pierced my very soul.

„How wrong you are, my love. Have you forgotten the gentle Master Jesus? He stayed on your earth but a short while, but in that short while He changed the thought of the world. What has been done, can be done again. One lone man or one lone woman, if he has the courage, can perform even greater miracles.”

A wave of inferiority swept over me. LeLando was right, yet all the rightness in the world could not halt the throb in my heart. I reeled in uncertainty. One part of my brain sounded a voice of warning. Though the heart of humanity had been often changed by its messengers of good will, still I did not feel equal to this gargantuan task. All my life I had been timid. Getting up in a classroom had been a terrifying ordeal. If I could place the message on the doorstep of humanity, then run away again it might be easy. But, I couldn't do that. I would have to stay and see it through. I would be sure to meet with controversy. Perhaps there would be tempest, even stone throwing. I would have to take the taunts and the missiles hurled by the ignorant and pseudo-intelligent. There would be times when I would be compelled to carry on in humiliation and despair.

How should I go about it? Should I go on a lecture platform? Should I try to preach? People hated to be preached to. A book. I would write a book. That seemed like the best solution. The inspiration of the message might carry me through if my heart were not so deeply involved. But a house divided against itself had never

been known to stand. With a great love gnawing at my heart how could I ever expect to be whole-souled and true?

Suddenly I seemed possessed of a gentle madness. I knew there could be no compromise. It was either the cause ... or it was love. I'm afraid my mental tossings had not evaded LeLando.

„O heart of mine,” he said sympathetically. „It would be my great pleasure to help you. But this time you alone must decide.”

I grasped at a very fickle straw.

„But what if I should make a wrong decision, LeLando? Do you think that would be fair? With only one chance, I mean?” „There are no accidents in the larger plan,” he philosophized.

„No accidents, perhaps,” I answered quickly. „But if I make a mistake I'll probably go to my grave worrying about it. But with you ...”

I broke into a spell of violent weeping. My secret was out.

„What is it dearest?” LeLando consoled. „Please do not weep.”

„Well,” I sobbed ... when you people here make a mistake you can start all over again. You just add a few more years to your life span. It doesn't really matter any more, LeLando. I don't care how old you are. I don't care if you're thirty or three hundred. Even if you're as old as Methuselah. I love you LeLando. I love you.”

A breathless silence ensued. I felt certain LeLando would tell me about it, now. He answered, finally.

„What does age matter, my love? When one has gained the knowledge of the secret power of renewal, the body is no older than it appears to be. The substances of life are being continually molded and remolded. It is not necessary that the life atoms melt away in a state of flux ... so that they might be reassembled again. As in death, I mean. The Time will come when your world too will enjoy longevity. But that cannot come while you harbor wars and destruction. Violence is the negative way of creating new beginnings. Where there is constructive ongoing, Heaven is always present, ready to cooperate.”

I stared incredulously.

„You mean, it’s as simple as that?” I asked. “Why our scientists back home have tried everything under the sun to hold back the years. Everything from bathing in Ponce de Leon’s magic pool, to face lifting.”

„Life on its downward arcs, forever breeds its own dissolution,” he informed.

Life on its upward arcs, is regenerating. Creative. Here on Venus we have learned how to recreate our bodies while we still live in them. It is quite simple, isn’t it?”

I realized suddenly, the Potentialities ahead in our own world. But, how long would it take to overcome the centuries of conditioning? On our planet age difference had always been a paramount issue in marriage. One could adjust easy enough on the mental planes, but the physical and the emotional could not be so easily reconciled. LeLando broke in on my mental controversy.

„To live vitally ... and to live long, my dearest, is indeed a grave responsibility. Many of our people actually prefer the change you call death.”

„You mean, when they can still remain young and beautiful ... yes even happy, they still wish to die? Why. I can't believe it. We hang on to the body as long as there is a kick left in it.”

LeLando smiled.

„That is due to the same private ends given to all earthly motives, my dearest.”

Now it was my turn to smile.

„We're afraid we might miss something, eh? Just another bit of selfishness,” I said.

„With you earth people,” LeLando smiled ... „tomorrow never comes. It is always just around the corner. Is that not so, my fair one?”

„Yes, LeLando. We are a rainbow chasing lot.”

„As you have observed,” he went on. „Here on Venus we live not only to enjoy the appetites, but to assimilate and digest as well. „We are often happy to surrender the human form, especially if it has reached a stage of satiation. Where no further good can be done in life. This is never a sacrifice. It is a privilege.”

My vagrant thoughts began to run riot again. I wondered how we people of earth would act were we allowed to keep our youth in- definitely? But, I need not wonder about it. I was no different from the rest. Of course, I'd be ready to indulge every whim and fancy that struck me.

LeLando read my silly thoughts.

„You would learn in time, my dearest. just as so many of us have come to realize ... eventually you would be very bored indeed. You would willingly give up your bodily form. Or else you would gladly wear the yoke of responsibility.”

„Maybe by that time I'd see it with the same eyes you do,” I said with a shrug. „Who knows . . . maybe as you say, I'd be glad to assume responsibility.”

Our session over, I was again ready for my couch of slumber.

8.

„Fate has decreed my child that friendship and love must go with you to the darkest shores of mankind. The voice of revelation has found channelship in you. You *must* carry it on.” It was David speaking, Good, kind David. His countenance wreathed in a flood of compassion, he too, was leading me in the way of my duty.

The evening meal over, we were all comfortably seated in a circular room.

„I'm so grateful for your help, David,” I returned. „It is a divine favor that has been bestowed upon me certainly something I have never earned on earth. While I'll do the best I can, of course, ... still there must be those who are so much better fitted to carry it out I am.”

„Divine favors must be earned,” David replied.
„Somewhere ... sometime you have earned that right.”

„But, I must confess ... I feel so hopelessly inadequate,” I replied.

„Are you not a citizen of the grandest land on your earth? America, my child, has never bended knee to king of priest. She has tried to practice her tolerance in the best way she knew how. The mandates of freedom decreed long, long ago will one day be realized, America will rise to live in the fullness of her Constitutional Rights, She will *live* her doctrine of justice, She will be forced to dig deeply into the soil of her great virtues. That which she has taught, she must one day practice. Here on Venus we have but one religion ... the religion of Love. Love eventually will become the tenet of America’s greatness.”

„But,” I reasoned. „Won’t all of these things come to our earth in the sequence of natural order. In its own good time? How can little me do anything to speed things along?”

„Daughter of Earth, first your land must know respite from wars and strife. Humanity must be taught in the ways of love. A new way of life must come to your world.”

Following David’s plea, there was a brief interlude in which nectars were served. We sipped our beverage to the accompaniment of heavenly music, and finally David went on.

„Hope is written in your histories just as it is written in ours. All the universes ... all worlds, they are bound

together by an unbreakable thread. At times that thread becomes snarled at some point. It wears thin in others. But eventually it is caught up and rewoven into the immortal fabric. Perhaps it would be convincing if we showed you rather than told you, just bow your land came to inherit its sorrows and strife. Where its opposition and conflict came from.” David turned a knob on an unusual looking instrument, and in a moment a picture-drama appeared on the opposite wall.

* * * *

The night wind tossed the trees in violent tempest. A storm was brewing in the cauldron of nature ... a storm that gripped my being in a vice of fear.

In a moment the heavens were in flames. The vegetation withered and shrunk, as if trying to escape from some unknown dread. Next came the animal life, bellowing and roaring. The birds of the air could no longer control their flapping wings. Destruction rode over the air waves ... a prelude to the approaching cataclysm.

Suddenly, the hour of darkness came, descending with a vengeance. The beautiful, lush valleys ... the snowcapped lofty peaks ... the villages and vales ... they all trembled on the brink of grim destiny.

In the heavens the thunder roared and the lightning crashed. The skies above were soon swimming in blood and fire. Heavy rocks in the rivers and streams were torn loose from their moorings. Spray and foam dashed over the land. The walls that had supported strong structures came tumbling down with one broad swoop. Towering

colonades were smashed to atoms. Palaces where the sovereign rulers lived, palatial mansions and small cottages alike, they were all plunged into the raging waters. It seemed that the earth had opened with its hungry mouth, swallowing her human family with ravenous gulps.

The cries of the weeping and wailing ones ... the anguished moans of the animals, could be heard above the sounds of nature's torrential roar. They Fought side by side with humans, tumbling over each other in an effort to reach higher ground, But they, too, were struggling against the inevitability of fate.

A few did succeed in clinging to the tangled growth, but not for very long. Nature on a mad rampage was out for revenge. Earthly wreckage was churned into a twisted mass of rubbish, leaving the pebbles of humanity crushed and bleeding in. the sweeping tide of destruction. They were left dead and deserted on the shores of a crumbling world. The land that had wallowed in sin, had now disappeared beneath the waves.

This was the ghostly tale that tradition had to tell. A tale that has been told and retold. That a few of them did escape to higher ground goes without saying for they were the seeds from which the present humanity has sprang. However, in the subconscious stream, the strife and terrors of a long dead past still flows. I knew now what David meant. This was the horror we must vanquish before life on earth could ever be tranquil and peaceful again. It must be wiped away on the subconscious slate before wealth and luxury such as the people on Venus knew, could be ours.

As soon as I could again orient myself, I turned to David.

„I think I understand now,” I said humbly. „We are all suffering from the sins of our forebears. We haven’t yet found ourselves. And to think ... in the very heart of the universe all the events that have passed are still preserved. But I suppose, measured in terms of eternity, a thousand years is but a day.”

„Every future is but the culmination of yesterday’s past,” David concluded. „Our yesterdays come back again and again. Each time they return they bring something new with them. The records of the past are ever open to be read.”

„But how in the world did you ever find *me*, hidden away in the wilds of Superstition Mountain?” I asked. „And why did I come away without Stephen?”

„There are many contact points on the Planet Earth,” David explained. „Points of ingress and egress from planet to planet. Your Great Desert is one of them. Superstition Mountain is another. These are the pivotal points in universal consciousness, because here the fragmentary remains of great continental histories are stored in secret archives. Never fear ... in the not-too-far-distant future, your earth will develop an antenna sufficiently powerful to tune in with us ... to know us as we are.”

„Little do you realize the potentialities of your land,” he went on. „Little do you know of its natural resources. When you find ways and means of -bending these resources to constructive use, when selfishness and greed

has been vanquished ... your earth will then be opened up. When that clay comes there will be no leveithan monopolies. There will be no faulty systems. There will be no power-seeking politicians.

„When nature’s storehouses are again opened up, all will have a share. This is prophesy. A prophesy that shall be fulfilled. To you, Child of Earth, has been communicated a trust. What you have learned here ... you must pass on there.”

9.

Cactus Jeff had been acting strangely for several days. He was often absent at dinnertime. When he did join us he left before our pleasurable after-dinner discussions. Jeff didn’t bother to explain his actions and I was growing disturbed. Somehow I felt that Blue Cloud knew about it by his knowing smile. It all added up to some sort of intrigue and I was bent on getting behind it.

I pinned him down, finally.

„What in heavens name are you up to?” I chided. "Remember, Jeff, we’re all in this together. We must have no secrets from each other.”

Jeff’s Saturnine, weather-beaten face burst into a blush that put even his red plaid shirt to shame.

„Tain’t nothin, Miss,” he sputtered. But his leathery skin finally wrinkled into a smile.

„Don't lie to me, Cactus Jeff Stringfeller,” I snapped. „You've been going around here looking like that cat that swallowed the canary for days. What is it?”

„But, I'm tellin' you it ain't nuthin,' Nuthin' at all,” he remonstrated, But I still sensed something and went after it.”

„You've been out prospecting, haven't you?” I chastised. “„Come on Jeff ... confess.”

Blue Cloud compressed his lips to avest a chuckle.

„What is it, Blue Cloud?” I probed. “You tell me if he won't.”

„Jeff got something ... gold all right. Him big glamour boy,” Blue Cloud slapped and rubbed his palms Navajo fashion.

„Glamour boy? What on earth do you mean? Has Cactus Jeff found romance?” Jeff's all-revealing smile confirmed Blue Cloud's admission.

„Why Jeff ... you secret-keeping old rascal,” I teased. “Will wonders never cease.”

„The shy prospector turned his head away to avoid my tantalizing eyes. Scraping the floor with the toe of his shoe, he said:

„Taig't nuthin' serious. But she's awful purty.” He hesitated a moment, then went on. „Ky-rie's my kind o' folks, too.”

„Ky-rie? What a pretty name?” I said. „Is she someone I've met Jeff,”

„No you ain't met her yet.”

„Jeff out looking for gold in hills, but finding gold in woman,” Blue Cloud snickered.

„Tell me Jeff, where *did* you find her?” I pursued.

„Jeff finding her in hills like deer,” Blue Cloud grinned. „Ky-rie good painter.”

„You mean she’s an actist? And you found her in the hills? Come now ... what else?”

Cactus Jeff stood abashed, twisting the brim of his straw hat.

„That’s all we know, Miss. She’s Ky-rie. An’ she’s awful nice.”

I saw the soul-fire that burned within him, and quickly turned my teasing banter to a more serious vein, “And why shouldn’t you find yourself a girl friend, Cactus. If she’s as nice as you say, I just must meet her soon.”

„She’s jest like Katie ... jes’ like her,” he said, a hurt look on his face.

„And who is Katie, Jeff?” I quiered.

Jeff twisted his hat some more, switching first to one foot, then to the other.

„T’was back yonder, more’n twenty year ago. I and Katie was engaged to marry. Then ... she tuk sick ... and ‘fore ever I could get the preacher, Katie died.” Jeff’s voice faltered. “Then when Katie went away ... I didn’t think thar was nuthin’ left to live for. That’s when I and Blue Cloud met up. We went to prospectin.’ But t’want much no how. I jest never could forget about Katie. An’ I never did. Ky-rie ... God bless her ... she’s come now. An’ she’s jest like my Katie.”

„I’m so sorry, Jeff. I don’t know why, but I guess I didn’t think about you in that way, About a woman, I mean. I’m so happy for you. It will make the rest of your visit here so much more pleasurable. Only don’t fall too hard, boy. You might get hurt again.” I think there was a bit of irony as well as deep pathos in my words.

„Don’t you go worryin’ none ‘bout me,” Jeff sputtered, drawing his lips into a straight line of resistance. “I ain’t a-goin’ back.”

For a moment I was bowled over.

“Don’t say that Cactus,” I warned. “You’re going back. I’m going back. There’s nothing for us, but that.” It wasn’t easy to be flinty trying to choke back my own sobs. But Cactus Jeff showed his stubborn streak. He clenched his fists and pounded the air.”

„An’ who’s a-goin’ to tell me why a feller can’t live where he wants to? Thar ain’t no governmint law to stop me from a-living here is thar?”

I was sympathetically gracious.

„No, Jeff. There are no legal limitations to bind us, thank Heaven. But sometimes there are spiritual laws that must be obeyed. Duties to be performed that are bigger than out desires. I’m afraid that’s how it is with us.”

Cactus Jeff’s face wore strain badly.

„I been a-huttin’ inside o’ me for more’n twenty year ... out thar in the hills ... sometimes all alone. Nobody to be a’tellin’ my troubles to but the coyotes. Now Ky-rie ... she comes. Nope. I jes’ ain’t a-goin’ back.”

„You talk to him Blue Cloud,” I begged. „You know we can’t stay here. You know *why* we must go back.”

„Here for learning big things,” Blue Cloud answered. He made a gesture, nodding his head slowly and rhythmically. “ Old Ones ... they know.”

Jeff’s smile was a bit on the sarcastic side.

„What’s that got to do with me? I ain’t school eggercated. I couldn’t learn them earth boobs nuthin.’ S’pose I did go back?”

„I know how it is, Cactus. I sincerely do,” I sighed. „I feel pretty inadequate myself. But its a job to be done. We’ve been chosen to do it.”

„Taint my job ... and I ain’t a-goin’ to do it,” he growled, sullenly. „Leastwise unless’r I can take Ky-rie back with me.”

„Don’t you think that would be a bit selfish, Cactus? Taking her away from all this?”

Jeff thought it out from another angle.

„Mebbe she won’t be a-needin’ to give it all up. Mebbe I’ll be strikin’ it rich.”

I was genuinely upset and showed it. It was one thing to be recalcitrant myself. Jeff was my personal responsibility. He would be needed to help confirm my story of our flight to Venus. My heart and soul went out to him. How well I knew what it would mean to go back over those millions of miles of space with a heart burning with love. I tried my best to console him.

„You’ll forget all about this Ky-rie as soon as you’re back home again,” I said. But my efforts were weak.

Why did happiness last for such a little while, then it had to be snatched away again? Cactus Jeff was a true, loyal soul. He would cling to his loyalties at all costs.

„No ma'm. I won't forget Ky-rie ... not ever,” he said bitterly. „She's plumb inside o' me like the itch. It's jest like meetin' my Katie all over again. When she's a-lockin' at me with them big black eyes, I'm afraid-like. I'm still a-seein' Katie when she told me goodbye ... then she up and dies, Ky-rie's purty nose turns up like my Katie's did. She's lookin' like an Eyetalian ... only she's sun- burnt.”

I grew more and more apprehensive as Cactus trailed on. I felt Jeff would never give in. It was downright catty of me to entertain the thought, but I felt that somehow he must be disillusioned, But how? When I should meet this Ky-rie, I probably wouldn't be able to find a single flaw. Which would be the kinder ... to disillusion him now ... or break his heart forever?

Still pleading his cause, Jeff kept right on.

„Jest like my Katie ... Ky-ries allus a-drawin' purty pitchers. Them two gals ... they're jest the same. You an' Blue Cloud better get about your 'rat-killin.' I jes' ain't a-goin' back.”

A hazy idea leaped to my rescue, and I intended to play it to the limit.

„How old is Ky-rie, Jeff?” I prodded.

„Reckon she's 'bout twenty. 'Bout as old as my Katie was.”

Blue Cloud pulled at his lips and pointed with his forefinger ... an Indian characteristic when an idea is born.

Tongue in cheek, I proceeded brazenly:

„Would you still love her Jeff, if you found out that she is an old woman. Say about a hundred?”

„But Ky-rie ain't no hundred, She ain't no old woman,” Jeff thundered.

Maybe you're right, Cactus. But yon heard what the little girl said about Queen Zo-na ... even her own father and mother. Think of them being able to live several hundreds of years ... and never show their age unless they want to.”

Cactus Jeff fumed.

„Am I and everybody else crazy? Don't you think I knows a youngun when I sees one? And how 'bout you and this purty fella? You ain't a-tellin' me what I kin do. I knows all about it. Yore smitten yourself.”

My heart skipped a beat and I struggled for poise. I could feel the muscles of my face twitching. Yes, I too was hopelessly caught in a web. I knew it. But still I had to go on.

„I've been through all that with myself,” I said at last. “And I've suffered, too. But it would be a joke on both of us if we should decide to stay here, then wake up some fine morning and find our idols of perfection were no longer young. My gallant Romeo a funny-looking geezer with a long white beard and bent hack. And Ky-rie ... suppose she too should wither up so that she resembled your great-grandmother?”

Easing out of this tight place with a bit of humor seemed the only way. But Cactus Jeff stormed. He could be so abysmally stubborn.

„It ain't so. It ain't so. An' my mind's made up. Ky-rie's purty. An' she's a youngun. If she ain't goin' back with me ... then I'm a-stayin' right here.”

I cast a glance in the direction of Blue Cloud.

„Woman in beauty staying in land of beauty,” he proclaimed, the air of an ancestral chieftain showing.

„Then by Ol' Billy Cain,” Jeff snorted, „I'm a-stayin too.”

Now I was growing desperate.

„Listen to me, Cactus,” I said. “We're in this together. We must stick together. Especially you and me, I've tossed on my silken sheets ... don't think I haven't. But whether we believe little Ley-sa or not, I do know these people have ways to keeping themselves young. We don't know their secret. If we did it might not work on us. Think it over, boy. Don't do anything rash. You're already past forty. In a few years you'll really be getting up there. Ky-rie will still be young and fresh and pretty. Suppose she gets tired of her ugly duckling? You'd be desperately unhappy, wouldn't you? The first thing, you'd want to get away from here. But you couldn't. You'd be trapped. Maybe you'd have to live a long time that way.”

His eyes were blazing.

„Ky-rie's my kinda folks,” he fumed. Fust time I ever met up with my kind'a folks in my whole life.”

„No, Cactus. They are not your people. They are not my people. But some day if we try hard enough we might be like them. We can do this. We can take a little bit of them back with us. Maybe we can spread a little of their joy to the folks back home. You'd like that wouldn't you?"

„Make 'em happy?" he grunted? „I jes' ain't that big-hearted. What'd they ever do for me?"

„But if we go back willingly, we will have done the job we set out to do," I argued. "There is some consolation in that, isn't there? It's like the soldier who must go out and fight. He doesn't like it ... but he doesn't shirk his duty, either."

My counselling over, I breathed a sigh of relief. With this new determination, I felt I too could face LeLando with a new intrepidity. So, I turned to Jeff in a more cheerful mood.

„I'd like to meet your girl friend, Cactus. I know I'm going to love her."

„Yore a-meanin' that Miss," he enthused, a new light in his eye. „You sure you won't try turnin' her away from me?"

„I'd never do that, Cactus. Not under any circumstances. Of course, you'll have to make your own decision in the end. I do hope you will see it my way. Somebody's going to have to show our selfish old world how not to be selfish. You believe that, don't you?"

But Blue Cloud claimed the last word.

„Be like Indians. No show pain. You forgetting my white friend ... white man taking Indian lands. Now Indian helping white man keeping lands he stole away.”

10.

LeLando's private terra-van was an extravagant creation designed for both comfort and speed. It reminded me somewhat of a luxurious automobile built to travel efficiently in the air or upon the waters as it was upon the land.

This happened to be one of those extra-special days. LeLando was taking me to the ampitheatre to view one of their inspirational dramas. He looked like a fashion-plate too, for he had discarded his customary robe for wide, bloomer-like pants of lazurli-blue, banded of the knee with gold brocade. His gem-studded tunic gave an added overtone to the charm of his personality.

I was looking my best, also, for Ona had seen to it that I was properly attired for the occasion. My dress was of a white, tulle-like material that fell in soft draperies around my body. A string of plain gold beads ... a waxen flower in my hair, added something to the rich simplicity of my costuming. My feet, like LeLando's were sandaled in kidskin.

I sank into the luxurious magnificence of the blue cushions with a jubilant abandon.

„You've been holding out on me LeLando,” I laughed.
““This is my dream-boat come true.”

LeLando smiled his appreciation.

„Beauty matches beauty, my love. Tonight you are like a sacred flower in my sanctuary.”

„You do say such lovely things,” I returned, a wisp of sadness in my tone. „But there are so many wonders here I can hardly keep track of them all.”

LeLando smiled as we drove away into the night. It was a heavenly drive, the magic of the crescent city fairly aglow against the starlit sky.

The ampitheatre was a huge, white marble edifice set back some distance from the avenue. It seemed to spring up from the center of a broad expanse of green lawn and flowering trees. To me it looked more like a library than a theatre. The crystalline roof, characterized the general trend of the architecture here.

„Must I say it again dear,” I exulted. „Will your marvels never end?”

„Again let me repeat, my dearest. „These wonders will one day be matched in your own land.”

„I’m afraid not in my time, LeLando. „It’s too far into the future for me to even dream about.”

„Changes come quickly,” he said. “Extremes must follow extremes. Just as joy follows sadness ... just as beauty follows ugliness. Just as peace follows wars. Only when the soul reigns can there be supreme happiness.”

As we came to the entrance of the ampitheatre, massive doors swung wide open, revealing a foyer profuse in its grandeur. Richly carpeted floors matched

exquisite wall hangings. Ornate gold and gems used so commonplacely here, almost took my breath away.

The ushers seated us in front of the wide, spacious stage, now ablaze with a strange mystic light. The music was soft and rhapsodie, the lighting and musical effects matching up.

Still overwhelmed by it all, suddenly I no longer felt happy. It was like a strange forboding ... something I couldn't explain. I tried to alibi to LeLando.

„It's so grand it's frightening,” I said.

For the first time since my arrival here, I felt apprehension. I almost wished that I had not come here. Out of nowhere there loomed into my consciousness, a picture of LeLando's dancing partner the day of our arrival, I recalled her exotic beauty, her delicately molded features. But what had she to do with my fears? LOLITA THE BEAUTIFUL. Why ... of course, she was the featured attraction tonight. Could they be one and the same person?

I tried to keep my feelings from LeLando, but he knew that something was wrong. The opening of the drama came to my rescue, Strains of flutes and harps filled the large interior. In a few moments the dancers appeared. In the „WINGED DANCE” the performers, attired in gorgeous feathered costumes, represented huge, fantastic birds. They danced first on light-feathered feet upon the surface of the stage, then rose slowly almost to the top of the ampitheatre. In a fast, rhythmic winged routine, their wings flapped backwards and forward with the grace and ease of a bird. Surely the famed dance directors on the

earth plane had never dreamed up a color festival like this one.

But I sat there, trembling, my cold fingers clutched tightly in LeLando's smooth, poetic hands. Hugged close to his body and bathed in the splendor of his spirit, I tried to give myself to the occasion. But the music soaring to a high crescendo hammered in my veins like a battery of hypnotic drums.

Again I was absorbed in the dance as each routine became more exciting than the last. There were no visible wires anywhere. No apparent means of propulsion. I pressed LeLando's hand, questioningly. He instantly understood.

„It is the law of levitation, my dearest,” he said in a soft whisper.

The next dance number proved to be the fatal one. It was that something for which I had unconsciously waited. Lolita the Beautiful ... and her charming partner Vy-cal.

„Why do they call her THE BEAUTIFUL?” I asked LeLando.

„Lolita is the most beautiful woman in our land,” he replied, pride and glory evident in his face.” Her talents too have never been surpassed on any of the planets,” he added.

My fears now were partially confirmed. I was jealous of Lolita. She was the same girl I had seen in LeLando's arms. And she *was* beautiful. The artists back home would have given anything to possess this ravishing model of pulchritude. Her olive-tinted skin, her dark

raven tresses and flawless features, now framed in the purity of her costume, made her look like an angel. I knew I could never hope to measure my virtues with her yardstick. And somehow I felt that LeLando was interested in her. But could any man on earth or on Venus have passed her by?

The dimming lights interrupted my unholy thoughts. The enchanting beauty was now beginning to fade. Suddenly the theatre was plunged into an eerie dread. With the fading of the last rays of brightness the stage suddenly became enveloped in a Satanic reddish glow.

Apprehension gave way to fright. This was the first repellant thing I had experienced since my arrival. What did it all mean anyway? I gripped LeLando's hand. Even his reassuring response was not enough.

Gradually the reddish flame extended its circumference. I tried to convey to LeLando that I was unhappy. That I wanted to be out of here. Why was he spoiling my beautiful concept of Venus? I had come across millions of miles of space to escape the world's sore heart. It was now being made real to me all over again.

As the flame extended to the back of the stage I could see in the light a row of hideous images. LeLando whispered in my ear.

„They are the scornful gods,” he said.

„I'm afraid, LeLando. Terribly afraid. Must we stay?” I begged.

„Yes, my dearest. I have reason for wishing you to stay to see it through.”

Before I could offer further protest, Lolita made another entrance in THE DANCE OF THE IMPRISONED SOUL. To her audience she was the soul of loveliness, but to me she was just another hateful image. Why couldn't I make my emotions behave? How would I ever get through this ordeal? I gritted my teeth; I dug my fingernails into LeLando's flesh. Resentfully I watched the grey-clad figure, bound and shackled with heavy chains, trying to rise from the floor.

The Martian light now revealed the awful leer on the faces of the images. In this electric atmosphere, the auditorium fairly trembled under the weight of the discordant music. Then it came to me like a flash. These people lived the „contrasts” of life vicariously ... in their dramas. These soul-stirring episodes kept them always reminded of what might happen to them should they lose their spiritual balance.

Lolita, garbed in the shroud of death, writhed and agonized, turning her pain-wracked face toward the audience. She was making a valiant attempt to get upon her feet. Even this ordeal of torture did not seem to interfere with the beauty that was there.

Gradually the volume of light increased. One by one the shackles gave way. With a strain of effort, Lolita was at last released from her bondage. The music continued to peel out its deafening, clanging noises as she swung into her dance. The hell-born lights playing upon the sinister faces of the images, made them seem even more wrathful. The amphitheatre fairly quaked beneath their swaying pedestals.

Lolita turned on them in defiance. They hurled back their hatred in full measure. A wan smile passed over Lolita's face as the last manacle dropped from her wrist and ankles.

„The music was more concordant now, and the Satanic lights cast a healthier glow. Lolita, in a spinning motion, cast away her shroud of death, revealing beneath it a robe of snowy white. Death had been metamorphosed into *life* itself.

The red lights changed to a soft violet, then to a magenta hue forming the pattern of a halo above Lolita's head. One by one the images fell to the floor as the beautiful creature, in a blaze of splendor, danced from the stage.

11.

Another thrilling event in my book of strange adventures was about to transpire. We had received an invitation to the Palace of Queen Zo-na.

„Think of it, Ona,” I shouted with a thrill, “We’re going to meet your wonderful Queen.” I was being fitted for a special party dress and Ona was supervising the work.

The smile that had been on Ona's lips faded away.

„We do love our Queen,” she said reverently.

„I know you do, Ona, and I'm going to love her, too.”
„But ... just look at *me*. Why. I've never looked like this

in my whole life. I should say that clothes certainly *do* make the woman.”

It was a bit of a revelation to me, because clothes had never been my chief concern. A pair of slacks, a sun-suit and comfortable sandals always made me feel happy. My social life had been sadly neglected in my quest for natural adventure. A love for the desert sands and the great out-of-doors came first. Now I wanted to look my very best, not only because I was in love with LeLando, but also I would soon walk in the presence of a Queen. This woman, sovereign over them all, would be sure to observe my tiniest fault. Even my best efforts would not be good enough.

Ona, dear sweet Ona ... she had hired the best dress designers in the land. The creation I was viewing in my mirror was the result. It was a light, airy dress, fairly iridescent with brilliance. It brought out the whiteness of my earthly fragility, adding luminosity to my dark brown eyes and chestnut hair.

I was deliriously happy, yet I sensed something in Ona’s wistful sigh that I didn’t quite like. Finally a vagrant tear rolled down her rose-pink cheek.

„Ona darling,” I cried. „Your’re weeping, Whatever is the matter?”

„I am thinking of our Queen, my dear. She is growing very tired...”

„You mean...?”

„We have been told by our seers that our Queen will soon be leaving us.”

„Surely she would never die after all these hundreds of years of reign? Not that, Ona. How would you ever get along without her?”

„There is no one person wholly indispensable, my dear. „Not even the grandest of them all. It is the way with life. We must accept our facts. But our hearts will be saddened. Our way will be lonely.”

„But ... she is your very backbone? Your life. Queen Zo-na is everything.”

„Yes, my dear ... „Queen Zo-na has well performed her task. Never has she compromised her people. Never has she bowed to ambition. Never has she been too busy to be one with the least of us. She has taught us the virtues of mutual sharing. She has given us much luxury and beauty. We here on Venus, have never known crime in any of its hateful forms. Great leadership, my dear, is known only by its result.”

„Aren't you just panicked at the thought of losing her, Ona? Can't something be done?”

„Yes, my dear. I'm afraid we are all more apprehensive than we care to admit. Perhaps it is because we fear masculine rule next time. The male is ever power-seeking. Masculine rule often leads to dominance. Again to tyranny. Good is ever the result of co-operation; never the result of conquest.”

„But it seems to me, your ideas of sex equality should just about make things perfect,” I replied.

„It is the male being who makes our wars, my dear, Never the female. Under feminine rule the seeds of violence have little opportunity to find fertile soil.”

„You said something that time, Ona,” I agreed, „I think I’ve always favored some sort of Super-Suffrage Movement ... a woman’s auxiliary government. That should put a stop to war.”

„Paternal leadership so many times leads to political disharmony,” Ona went on. „No, my dear, I feel certain your earth would not know the meaning of war, if the women of your world had a voice in the declaration of war.”

„Then, if Queen Zo-na must go on to her final reward, why doesn’t she first delegate her responsibility? Why not name another Queen?” I questioned. „Still...” I rambled on ..., „I can’t for the life of me see why this woman who has brought the greatest of all civilizations into being, should want to pass on and let someone else take over. Having the power to overcome death, I would call it a form of suicide.”

Ona appeared to be shocked.

„I regret your misunderstanding, my dear. Our honored Queen is not surrendering to the vagaries of uncertainty. While she has the power to extend her life years, it is not so destined that she do so. Our Queen has led her beloved people far up the ladder of achievement. In our childhood she mothered us with love. She has guided us wisely through our adolescence. She served us well in our adulthood. Now we must stand or fall ... but we must do it alone.”

„I certainly marvel at your fine spirit, Ona”, I said.

„One must try to view life from the horizons of wisdom, my dear. In the life of every individual ... in the

life of every nation ... on all planets everywhere ... there comes the time of change. Disharmony in any social structure is in reality an internal illness. Wise and honest leadership can always bring about a cure. But when the end is the result of physical dissolution ... earthquakes or volcanic upheavels, then only Nature can heal these ills. But, my dear ... time is fleeting. LeLando will soon arrive. You must be thinking about meeting our Queen. It will be an event you will long remember."

"I'm putting it down in my book as one of the major events of my life," I returned.

* * * *

LeLando arrived at the appointed hour, looking like a knight of old. His green velvet pantaloons were richly decorated with golden gems. But I felt quite equal to the occasion.

"You look beautiful tonight," he said, taking me in admiringly, as he lifted my hand to his lips. "The miracle of love has possessed you."

"My Prince," I breathed ecstatically, "You too are charming. And it's all in the name of your glorious Queen. I do hope, LeLando that I behave properly. You see, I've had so many new adjustments to make. Every time I turn around it's something new."

"You have nothing to fear from our Queen," my fairest. "Queen Zo-na extends the glad hand of fellowship to all alike."

As our terra-van drew up before the gates of the palace, I believed I did have something to fear. My infernal jealousy. My body quaked with an evil

forbidding, for just ahead of us, alighting from her gilded coach was that delectable bit of femininity ... Lolita.

Was she friend or foe? I still didn't know. But why was I being I continually haunted by this gorgeous creature? And why did the hurt persist when LeLando assured me in every way that he loved me? Neither by word or act had he ever expressed a personal interest in Lolita. Was it something out of the past? Perhaps a romance that had never come to an end on her part?

As if impelled by some invisible power, our eyes met ... mine in a frozen stare. I tried desperately to fight the emotion that was pounding within me, but my legs were unsteady and I reeled in dizziness. LeLando almost dragged me through the doors of the palace.

What had happened to my world ... the world that had been so happy and gay? Why was LeLando letting me agonize this way? Sensitive as he was to my vibration he surely knew the torment going on in my soul. Moreover, what would this Queen Zo-na think of me? She too would look into my black heart and see the jealousy that was there. I fought to hold back the tears brewing in my cauldron of misery.

The handsomely groomed man-servants in attendance at the doors of the palace, bowed low in greeting. I prayed silently that I should be relieved of this horrible oppression. That I would not take my shame into the throne room of this immortal woman.

Whether in answer to my prayers, or the miracle of the dazzling fights ... suddenly I did feel relieved. Then

almost unconsciously I was ushered through the doors into the Chamber of the Queen.

It was an immense, circular-shaped room, a large open fireplace at one end that exuded a warmth of good cheer. At the far end, a miniature indoor garden was profuse with flowers and greens. A crystal fountain threw a soft spray against the spectrum of rainbow colors, filling the vast room with a beauty that was almost supernatural.

Costly draperies adorned the walls, each depicting the history of the land. The floors were carpeted with luxurious coverings, furniture of gold and ivory placed ornately about the room. Mortal words would do no justice to the majestic elegance of the Queen's Chamber.

Her Majesty, regal and stately, was seated on a throne chair of filigreed gold, draped in rich, royal purple. I gazed spellbound, for she was a much more youthful woman than I had expected to meet. Her face was alight with compassion, yet she had that manner of command that suggested not just one single unit of womanhood, but the composite loveliness of all womankind. There was a glory in her smile that greeted me ... a voice like music from the radiant spheres. „Child from the Planet Earth,” she said. „Queen Zo-na bids you welcome to the Great Planet Venus.”

„It is such a great privilege to be here,” I said bowing low. “And a still greater privilege to meet you Dear Queen.” I was embarrassed at my lack of good breeding on such an occasion, but I did the best I could.

„Ours is the Utopia sought by all men through all the ages,” she said. “Through many winding centuries the

clear ray of perfection has shone down upon us. Always remember, Child of Bacth . . . love is your protection against all evil. Love alone, my cherished one ... can clear away the darkness. The religion of Venus is a religion of Love.”

„This is the most wonderful thing that has ever come into my life,” I answered, my voice sounding its excitement and completely off key.

„You must open wide the portals and permit the solar rays to stream into your heart, my child. Enjoy the beauties of this night to the fullest.” It was a kindly command, and I wanted so much to obey it. But how infinitesimal I felt in the presence of this woman who wore in her forehead the insignia of immortality. To me, Queen Zo-na was like a Cosmic Mother.

Again the strains of heavenly music emanating from the ballroom, sent my soul soaring to the heights. Queen Zo-na bowed her dismissal that I too might revel in the pleasures of the evening.

LeLando led me appraisingly into the center of the gay activities, which just as quickly turned into wild pandemonium. I stood there, shocked beyond belief for Cactus Jeff and Blue Cloud had taken over the entertainment. The beat of the Indian drum keeping time to the lively strains of „Com-t-yi-Yippee” and „Pop Goes the Weasel” penetrated deep into my soul. „How awful! How simply awful!” I screamed inwardly.

My voice filled with angry fire, I stormed at them.

„Cactus Jeff! Blue Cloud! What on earth is the meaning of all this racket?” I fairly hurled my words

almost knocking Cactus Jeff from his chair. He looked up at me in chagrined bewilderment, Sad-eyed he tried to defend himself.

„I ain't a doin' nuthin, Miss. Jest a-playin' my geetar a little.

„That's all I been a-doin'.”

That's *all!* Isn't that enough? Aren't you ashamed coming here and disgracing us? Don't you know you're making a perfect idiot of yourself? And Blue Cloud is helping you?”

LeLando saw an awkward situation getting out of hand and tried to quiet us.

„Please do not be disturbed, my dearest. I am sure our friends are sincerely honest. I should say it is quite amusing.”

„Amusing?” I exploded bursting into hysterical weeping. „Why ... they've disgraced Queen Zo-na's palace. I'm so ashamed of them.”

Almost in unison, the wide-eyed spectators voiced their protest. Ky-rie, defiant in Cactus Jeff's defense, spoke up,

„We have found Cactus Jeff Stringfeller's entertainment very pleasurable,” she said pertly.

Then another voice was heard from.

„Please desist, dear lady ... Let us have some more of same.”

I looked around the large ball-room. The assemblage included the scholarly; the accomplished; the lettered; the diplomats, Their habilaments presented a phantasmagoria

of colorful elegance. Who was I to try to run this show? LeLando too tried his power of persuasion.

„You see, my dearest, our people enjoy learning of other cultures.”

„Other cultures,” I returned, „You just don’t understand, LeLando. This is barn dance music, Indian war whoops. We may have defamed the arts on earth, but this is disgraceful.”

Cactus Jeff was filled with humility.

„I didn’t aim to go a-disgracin’ you, Miss. I jes’ been a-dyin’ to play my geetar ever since I come here. It was for Ky-rie. It was.” Cactus was genuinely contrite and my heart softened a bit.

„All right, Jeff,” I apologized ... pouting a little for I hadn’t had time to cool off. „If it’s the wish of our friends ... then to ahead.”

A cry of good cheer went up from the dancers and the next hour was turned over to these prospectors from earth ... one with an Indian drum the other a guitar. These musical instruments comprised the only baggage these two had brought with them. It seemed ludicrous entertainment for these Venus people, whose music in my estimation, had come from heaven.

The lively chords soon found echo in many strange feet, and the Queen’s ball was suddenly turned into a Saturday night country dance. Even Queen Zo-na herself was a spectator and the smile she wore finally put me at ease.

At length the pandemonium over, and harmony restored once more, Cactus Jeff and Blue Cloud were

content to enjoy their own immense popularity behind tall glasses of nectar.

Again the strains of soft music filled the room and the dancers assembled with their partners.

„Tonight is our,” LeLando caressed. “Let us dance and sing and be happy together.”

I hesitated a moment.

„Your dances are strange to me, LeLando,” I smiled. „I’m sure I’ll give a very bad performance.”

„Our dances merely follow the natural rhythms,” he replied. “It will not prove difficult,” I assure you.

Of course, it wasn’t the dance steps I feared. It was my inadequacy in the sight of Lolita. She was perfection *par excellence* and I knew it. LeLando would be sure to compare us.

My mind reeled with uncertainty as LeLando whisked me into his arms. Our bodies melting one into the other, our souls went away on the music of the spheres. Floating on rhapsodic waves of celestial strains, LeLando whispered words of love into my ear.

„Love is the wings of this dance, my dearest. I just knew it would be like this.”

„So did I, LeLando,” I said in an ecstatic whisper. „It’s so wonderful.” I was sure the essence of LeLando’s soul was passing through mine.

In a moment we found ourselves out on the veranda of the Queen’s Garden, LeLando’s arms about me.

„I love you dearest,” he said. „I’ve loved you through all the eons of time. Ours is a love created from the eternal fabric. It must go on, forever and ever.

Tears glistened in my eyes. My voice choked behind a sob.

„I love you too, LeLando. More than you will ever know. Maybe now you can understand,” I wailed hopelessly. „You can see ... you must see ... it would be cruel to have our love snatched away again. Every moment away from you will be an age.”

„If love is to endure it must be sealed at the zenith point, my dearest. Then never can it be torn asunder. Ours is like a stream of clear pure water that has flowed from the beginning. There can never be a separation, my love. We will be together always for your spirit will be clinging to my soul.”

„I’ve tried ... I’ve tried so very hard to believe that,” I said wistfully.

It was a beautiful starlit night and the orange moon looked down upon us with great generosity as LeLando continued.

„The ecstasies of the flesh are but for a moment, my dearest. The touch of the lips is fleeting. But our love is a star that will light our pathway through all the realms celestial. It cannot be swept away neither by distance nor the tides, for it is the spirit that makes the tides flow. We will meet again ... never fear. We will meet where the trivialities of life have no existence. When the troubles of earth are forgotten.”

LeLando's last words were lost to the night breeze for in a moment I had fallen from my world of transcendancy to a world of Black bondage. Lolita was coming toward us in greeting. She was happy and smiling. Lolita had that power of command I lacked. To e she was like a dreadful plague that came on the night's dark wings. This horrible scourge inside of me was whipped into sudden fury. I was going back to the earth plane, Lolita would be here with him, always.

Nothing could change my mind now. A woman's intuition assured me that sometime or other there had been something between them. It was written in Lolita's dark fatalistic eyes. It was there in her quivering lips. It was blended into the radiation that emanated from her when she came close to him.

I wanted to be a good sport about it, but I just couldn't be gracious. I'm sure my eyes blazed jealousy. My face must have been frozen in immobility. I couldn't seem to dismiss this thing that tugged at my heart.

LeLando saw my unhappy plight and took over.

„My dearest,” he plead with felicity. „I pray that you and Lolita will become fast friends.”

Lolita smiled at me, and I was sure her smile was loyal and true.

„You must try to be happy, my dear,” she said. „Our loved ones from the faraway worlds are always welcome here.”

I was trying. I was trying hard to regain my poise. But I'm sure my weak „thank you, Lolita” fell very flat. I was heartily ashamed of my efforts, for I knew Lolita wanted

to be kind. I think this angered me all the more. It made me more apprehensive than ever.

Perhaps she looked upon me as a mere infant. An incompetent. But in the end it was Lolita who came to my rescue.

„Come, my friend ... let us talk in this beautiful garden,” she said. „The night air will refresh you. Too, we shall become better acquainted with each other.”

„No! No!” I sobbed. I must be alone. All alone. Please Lolita ... this is my problem. I must solve it in my own way.”

12.

Left alone at last, I threw my body on the emerald green beside a sparkling fountain of thermal waters. My heart ached with torment. To think that so short a while ago I had been divinely happy. Now even that spirit of friendliness that permeated this strange land had suddenly gone away. The mountains in the distance that only yesterday had filled me with a sense of boundless security. Now they were like so many sinister monoliths glaring at me from above. It seemed to me that the jagged rocks that leaned far over the ledges, were now beckoning to me with a hand of death.

The merry cheer coming from the Queen’s gala party was deafening to my ears. The flutes and the harps that had furnished sweet music for my first dance with LeLando now sounded rasping and harsh. The swiftly

running water cascading over the crystal rocks seemed to echo my pain. But over the sounds of both man and nature I could hear *his* voice. It was above me, beneath me ... it comingled with all the other sounds, and I knew it would be that way until the longest day I might live.

Hark! The voice of my mind called. Footsteps were approaching. But they were not his footsteps. I soon recognized Cactus Jeff. In the half light I could see the outline of his red plaid shirt. His straw hat. Jeff stopped short at the sight of me.

„I’ve been a-lookin’ everyplace for you, Miss,” he said. “What’a matter? Gotta a headache ... or sumpin’? Ain’t you havin’ no fun.”

„Please go away, Jeff,” I sobbed. „I don’t want to see anyone ... right now.”

Jeff looked troubled.

„Jes’ tell Cactus about it,” he sympathized. “I and Blue Cloud yore friends. Did you have a fuss with the purty fella?”

„Please, Jeff”, I cried plaintively. „Go away. Please ... go away.”

It was a tear-stained face I turned toward him. It seemed cruel of me to fail these two loyal fellows.

„I want to meet your Ky-rie,” I said at length. „But not tonight.”

„Aw ... that’s all right,” Jeff assured. „Ky-rie ... she's got understandin’. She ain’t goin’ to mind.”

„Thanks, Jeff. You're such a swell person,” I managed to say.

„You see how it is, don't you? I jes' can't go back in there. I want to go home ... to Ona and David.”

„You ain't goin' home alone ...! If it warn't for Ky-rie ... I would taken you home. But what's the matter with the purty fella?”

„I can't tell you, Jeff. I can't tell you.”

„He ain't been a triflin'”, he drawled, eyeing me severely.

„No, Jeff. LeLando's the sweetest, dearest man that ever lived. It's me. I don't know. I guess it's this infernal age business at the root of it all. It's Lolita. She's beautiful. And Jeff ... she's going to stay that way. I can't stay young. Nor can you. It won't be long before we're what they call 'he-bags' and 'she-bags.' I'm jealous, Jeff. Devilishly jealous.”

The weather-beaten miner tried so hard to comfort me. He could see the picture from my point of view. But he still couldn't hook it up with his own problem.

„Well, I'll be hoofin' the devil round a stump,” he ejaculated.

„It sure is a funny ol' world, ain't it?”

13.

Cactus Jeff's face broke into wrinkles of joy as he proudly announced:

„I and Ky-rie's a-goin' to get married.” A hush went around the big dining table in Ona and David's home.

The indomitable quality in Jeff's voice spoke its finality. There was nothing more I could do about it, But I'd try to hide my feelings behind a mask of conventional courtesy.

I looked straight through Ky-rie whom I had just met. She wasn't beautiful, really, but she was charming. There was something picturesque and quaint about her. Her features were somewhat irregular ... high cheek bones, a rather large mouth, and skin slightly on the coppery side. Sultry, oblique eyes looked out through long, curled lashes.

„I'm sure you are going to make Cactus Jeff very happy,” I said feebly. „We will all do everything possible to help you adjust to our crude way of life.”

I watched Ky-rie for her reaction. While she stemmed from the worker class, there was certainly no trace of inferiority about her. That same poignant grace and an ephemeral quality inherent in all these people, instantly set her apart. She started to speak, but Cactus Jeff broke in.

„Ky-rie ain't a-goin' to have to learn no new ways, Miss. We're stayin' right here.” I'm sure my eyes flashed with the fire of indignation. But why should I feel this spiritual responsibility toward two fellow human beings? I had only known them since our arrival here, yet they seemed to be my personal charges. I turned a thoughtful face toward Ky-rie.

„I hope you do know what you are doing, my dear,” I said.

„We have talked it over at great length,” she returned.
„Jefferson Stringfeller is adamant in his choice.”

„You mean, Ky-rie, he’s downright bullheaded,” I fired back. „Cactus Jeff is the most stubborn man I have ever met.”

„I ain’t nuthin’ o’ the kind,” Jeff stormed back, his small beady eyes flashing fire. „I been a-livin’ more’n forty year, I ain’t never had no square deal yet. Allus somebody jiggs me outta my due. I ain’t eatin’ no more crow. An’ I ain’t goin’ to be no more buzzard bait for them city slickers down thar. It’s allus the same. When I’m a-thinkin’ the good Lord’s on my side, along comes some thievin’ billy goat and eats up my bakin an’ beans. Yes ... folks ... I’m gettin’ along with my rat killin’. I ain’t a-goin’ back.”

I held my tongue in my cheek, but I was doing some fast thinking. What could I do now? Was there any way in the world to change his mind? Ky-rie was the soul of honor. She wouldn’t do it if she thought it was not the right thing to do. But Cactus Jeff had completely sold her on the idea of our greedy, corrupt world. She felt now that she would be doing the right thing to stay on Venus. Failing, I turned to Blue Cloud.

„And you, Indian ... are you staying too?”

Blue Cloud turned his head toward the cliffs in the distance. His strong Indian character showed in every line in his face.

„Blue Cloud staying with white friend,” he said with definiteness.

I was beside myself. They were all against me now. Indians were given to the cause of freedom. Words meant little to an Indian compared with deeds. Blue Cloud felt that here on Venus he had somehow been reborn into the consciousness of his ancestors. He had been taught along these lines in the Kiva. Here he could abide silently in his own characteristic staunchness and strength of mind. I spoke again, this time only to break the strain of tension.

„So ... Blue Cloud ... you're deserting me, too.”

„Blue Cloud staying. We all be friends together.”

* * * *

The sound of LeLando's voice brought me to the realization of my own problem. Again the ache of love overpowered my good judgement. Why had such a cruel barrier been set up against us? 'Why was my soul on fire? It was hard for me to smile as I turned in greeting, but Cactus Jeff was ahead of me, He waxed vociferous in is friendly gesture for he had something to tell.

„Hi feller,” he greeted ... why yore jest in time for the fun. I ... and Ky-rie ...

LeLando beamed.

„My wishes and good fortune goes with you both,” he said, bowing graciously.

I was anxious to get away from Cactus Jeff now. I still hoped things would turn out as I wished them to. I switched the conversation purposely from the personal to the impersonal.

„Notes on this marriage business is something I need to take back home,” I said, „I want to gather up all the

material I can find on the subject of happy marriages. We can use some of that down there. With us, marriage is growing to be one grand failure.”

David started the ball rolling.

„Here on Venus the state called marriage is usually a happy state,” he said.

„I’m sure that’s how marriage should be,” I agreed. „But with us it’s become more like a battlefield for the human emotions. That’s why I want to take notes. I’d like to know more about your special brand of marriage magic.”

„We do not live by magical rote, my dear,” Ona answered.

I laughed.

„It is so very simple,” Ona went on, First with us, marriage is never an end in itself. If a marriage is to succeed it must contribute to a common purpose. Each partner must learn to share the joys and ills of the other. Marriage here on Venus, is at all times, a spiritual romance.”

„It may sound simple, the way you put it, Ona dear,” I returned. „But it seldom works out that way in practice. At least in our world. I think more often than not, we blunder into marriage wholly propelled by the animal instinct. That is at the root of our growing divorce rate, too.”

„Without the spiritual urge any marriage is sure to fail,” David asserted. „Without the spiritual urge, the nuptial couch is defiled.” Cactus Jeff flushed a turkey

red. Words started to issue forth but apparently he thought better of it and decided to listen.

David continued:

„We are taught in the ways of marriage. Love must be cultured just as one tends the flowers in the garden. Love should be both the beginning and end of romance. Friendship is the beginning of universal fellowship and love, Friendship is the foundation upon which any successful civilization must be built, also.”

I felt I was getting in pretty deep.

„Do I understand correctly? Do you mean ... you do not ever really *fall* in love here? As we do, I mean?” I was thinking of the great love I had found.

„First there must be the compatible ray.” David answered. “But love to remain pure must be planted in fertile soil, the seeds given the tenderest of care. Only then can love grow straight and strong.” „But how do you know whether there is a compatible ray or not?” I argued, thinking about Stephen now. How quickly I had been able to transfer my love for Stephen to this wonderful LeLando. David answered in his own quiet way.

„When there is a proper compatible radiation ... when there is like-mindedness and the ability to blend harmoniously ... this furnishes a working foundation. From there any of the elements can be properly molded. From such a union we are blessed with superior children.

I turned the next question over in my mind before asking it. Finally curiosity overpowered convention.

„You surely do not ignore the passional nature?” I said.

Ona assumed responsibility for this.

„There is only one real passion, my dear. The passion of the spirit. All things in the end must be purified in the divine flame. Passion without compassion leads ever to a destructive ending. LeLando who had been waiting his turn, broke in.

„As you well know, my dearest, we do not ignore the flesh. Perhaps we have a greater appreciation for the pleasures of sense only because our love nature is more intense. Sex is at the root of every great achievement. It is the Mercurial fluid of transcendency.”

„However, we do not use sex merely as a whip to the senses,” David added. „The real thrill of sex is in parenthood.”

„Love is our religion here, as you have seen,” Ona rejoined. „Love turns us toward the higher goals. Since we never culture the commonplace in marriage, we have few cases of infidelity. Infidelity exists only when there is uncertainty in love. When soul speaks to soul only happiness results. When this kind of love can be established throughout the Greater Universe, then the Utopian Life will indeed reign.”

Again David took up the conversation where his beloved wife left off.

„Human adjustments begin in the heart,” he said. „Ideals are soul-born. Here we heed the little things. Little things are so important, yet so often neglected in your land. If love is to endure, harmony must be practiced. Special values must have special attention.”

I lapsed now into a state of real interest. Along with Cactus Jeff and Blue Cloud. I was turning over in my mind, step by step, those waves of love with LeLando. Now as I analyzed it, it was a different emotion from any I had ever experienced before. It was a genuine fellowship in spirit. LeLando transmuted all my earthly pains. He sung beautiful arias in the depths of my consciousness. I wanted to cling to the last fragment of that love, forever. I wanted to seal it up in a sacred vault only I to have the key.

But it wasn't that way any more. The hurt persisted. Tears came to my eyes, Unashamed, I let them fall. LeLando was my Prince of the Spirit. Whether I remained on Venus or went back to earth, he would be with me always ... sometimes in objective form ... again as a subjective ideal. But he would be there, buried in the castles of my consciousness. He would be there like the chords of an unfinished symphony.

Thank Heaven, this crescent city of the Planet Venus had no special franchise on beautiful thoughts ... and transcendent ideas. They would be cultivated on any of the planets. The High Priest had said that one day our earth would find that golden key. That upon the solidarity of tried and true foundations laid down by other planets, our own structure of civilization would be built.

There was nothing fantastic about this. Already there were too many corroborating factors. The families of the world had been gathered together on America's free shores. The great ones from other countries had brought with them their arts, their sciences, their literature and their music.

Everything seemed to point the way to a new life for our Earth.

In America the best seed had been garnered and the planting day was close at hand. It was decreed that when the burdens of life grow too heavy to bear ... „when human suffering can no longer endure ... when other lands are reduced to ashes and the fangs of the serpent have struck ... then it is written that America shall rise, the destined meeting place of all the peoples of earth.”

The prophets are ever the torch-bearers. The prophet appears in the darkening hours. The prophet usually comes out of the barren wildernesses of life.

These good people on Venus had said, that the hope of our land is a spiritual hope.

14.

The days were speeding by, packed to the brim with moving events. LeLando had adjusted my dials of discord and he was now devoting himself whole-souledly to the task of making me happy.

I was ashamed of my weakness and I too was making every effort to cleanse my soul of the horrible taint that was there. LeLando tried so hard to make me understand that love was my protection against all evil impulses. He tried to make me know that any difficulty would eventually fade against the weight of persistent effort.

The people of the city shaped their world to their highest ideals. They knew their great power, and they

were invincible. This was the pattern any true democracy must eventually follow. It was this blue print of perfection I must take back to earth. I had so many things to file away in my memory now. I didn't want to miss a single thing. LeLando and I were in Ona's garden for the last time. Drawing me close, LeLando whispered.

„My dearest. My bride of earth.”

I snuggled close ... so close that our very breath seemed to merge with the night breezes. Through partly opened lips we drank from the fountain-head of divine nectars. The polarized atoms of two beings in love had burst into vibrant flame.

„Oh LeLando,” I cried. „What have you done to me?” Tears welled up in my eyes ... the overflow from some divine stream. „I'm sure you love me, LeLando,” I wailed. “You do ... you?”

„I love you truly, my dearest. Truly, indeed.”

My heart leaped with a shred of hope.

„Then we can be together like this ... always,” I implored.

„When the spirit is wedded there can be no separation,” he returned somewhat evasively,

„It's all so strange, LeLando. If only you wouldn't send me away.”

LeLando searched the depths of my soul, as we sat there drinking in the waters of the spirit.

„Never fear. We shall be together, my love. We will be together in a relationship that is ever divine.”

„But that is not what I want, I remonstrated. „I don't want to be a spirit. I want it to be like this. Please believe me, LeLando. *This* is the way I want it to be.”

He looked out across the beautiful valley.

„Please see it my way,” he pleaded. His face now wore a real trace of pain.

„It is so hard to make you realize what has happened to you my fairest. Here on Venus you have experienced an initiation of spirit. In your heart you have known the predestined potential of all the planets in the universal system. When spiritual integrity has been awakened in the body of your earth humanity, then we shall meet again and be together ... forever.”

Why was it so difficult for me to comprehend his meaning? There seemed to be such a fine line of demarkation between reality and unreality. My mind seemed to understand, but my heart was involved, and that was something altogether different.

„But I can't go away and leave you. I *can't*,” I wailed, „I want to become your bride ... not only in spirit, but in the flesh as well.”

„Ours will be a love transcendant, my fairest. A true love, for ever open to the universal tides.”

„I do wish I could face it courageously,” I cried, “But I am a woman. To a woman, love is a personal thing.”

„As I have tried to convey to you my dearest ... distance is no barrier to love. There will always be that glorious unity between us.

„You mean ... I can come and go ... at will?”

„Yes, my love ... if you will seek beyond the lips. In spirit there is no parting. Once the link between flesh and spirit is made secure ... it can never be broken. Now do you see why you must go back? But ... before you go, we shall be married. Married in the Temple of Venus.”

„Married? In the temple? Had I heard LeLando’s words correctly? They seemed to echo and reecho in my ears.

„You mean that, LeLando? You really mean it?” I cried, overwhelmed with emotion.

„It will give my honored father esteemed pleasure to join us in holy matrimony, my dearest.”

Overcome now, I slipped into a quiet coma. So many things had happened to me ... and now the most wonderful thing of all. But LeLando soon brought me back to reality.

„Now that you comprehend more fully, my love ... you must promise to be strong. Promise you will not fail in your mission on earth.”

„Yes, LeLando. I’ll go back. I won’t fail you. I promise.”

How could I fail this man ... all virtue ... all honor? While my soul was still whole, my heart was sobbing. LeLando was so very kind. He could see the pain that was there.

„You will harbor no regrets for your decision, beloved. I feel certain of that.”

Our promise was sealed with a kiss.

„Remember, my dearest, be always merciful,” he concluded. „The problems of your humanity is a grave responsibility. The Book of the Future has been opened to you. Many great changes will come. But remember in the darkest of hours, that one day there will be an integration of all the peoples everywhere in the universe. Out of this will come the New Social Order of your Earth.”

„My great love will go with you,” he said. „And always in time of need you have but to summon and I will be there.”

15.

The temple atop the sacred mountain scintillated with radiant fire cast down from above. This was my wedding day. In this beautiful land of glory, the rarest of delicacies were reserved for such gala days. Costumes were fashioned from the most exquisite materials to be worn only on these festive occasions.

My wedding dress was simply divine ... of snowy white satin, resplendent with dazzling gems. I was at my best, and I knew it. Not even the fair maidens of this enchanted land could outdo me. But it was still ‘hard to realize that this was all for me.

Ley-sa tip-toed quietly into my dressing room just as the female servants were completing my toilet. It had been a busy day for the little girl too, for she had been chosen the Queen of the Flowers, „You darling,” I

exulted, taking her into my arms. „Why ... you're just like an angel.”

„I do have appreciation for your kind favors,” she replied innocently. „You too are gladdened with beauty for this occasion.”

„Thank you, Ley-sa,” I glowed. „I'm sure I'm the happiest person in this whole universe.”

„When the heart is touched, one sees only the splendor of the

sunset,” the little girl replied.

„I'll never know days like this again,” I sighed. „But I suppose I should be grateful for just this little while. This beauty I shall always carry it around in my heart.”

„The one who does not observe beauty can never know real love,” the child philosophized.

Love! The lilting sound of that strange little word cut straight into my heart like the sword of Damocles. ‘Love’! The word held in its very palm my whole existence. My lips began to quiver with an emotion I could not control.

„The kind of love you experience here does not exist on our planet,” I said. “You realize that don't you, my dear?”

The child looked up at me through the fringe of her long lashes.

„Love is the same everywhere when the door to one's heart is open,” she replied simply.

I knew I was not up to a discourse on love at this point, so I concluded smiling:

„Who started this anyway, Ley-sa? Let's change the subject, shall we? Do you realize dear ... I haven't even rehearsed for my wedding? I do hope it goes off all right.”

„Do not fear,” Ley-sa returned. „You are sure to do the right thing at the right time.”

„You do have faith in me, don't yon Ley-sa, dear?”

„From the lips of a little child, only the truth comes forth,” she replied.

I sighed again. If only I possessed a fragment of Ley-se's good judgment. An infinitesimal fraction of her fine-pointed wisdom.

But ... my heart began to pound wildly. Soon now, I would become LeLando's bride. For the last time I would feel that beautiful rapture. His lips would be pressed against mine. Ok ... the ecstasy of life's supreme moments! Why did they have to pass away?

If only Lolita were not there. I felt certain my love would last forever. But Lolita was still a haunting reality. She would be a resident on Venus. She would be with him, always.

A man-servant announced that LeLando was waiting. He told us that the lower avenues were already thronged with the merry-makers. The processional had started at the foot of the mountain and they were proceeding to the temple on foot. It was a custom with the Venusians to welcome the bride and groom in this fashion. As Ona explained it to me, it was their belief that marriage not only welded two lives together, it enlarged two lives as well.

I thought it a beautiful token of welcome and was more than grateful for it.

The idyllic trip up the mountainside was to be my last and I wanted to enjoy it to the fullest. The wooded fairyland was attired in nature's best raiment. The many-hued rocks had never been more colorful. The valleys had never been greener.

Our terra-van finally caught up with the processional. Laughter, song and gayety rent the air. As they saw us approaching they threw garlands of flowers along our pathway. The skies above were buzzing with myriads of circular shiny ships that glistened in the sunlight like phosphorescent moons. They too, sent down a shower of flowers.

The winding, ribboned road led past palatial mansions dotted with pools of magic water. These thermal pools were radio-active and highly mineralized, and they helped to keep the people of Venus in the finest of health.

LeLando took my hand in his. It did help to restore that feeling of absolute completeness ... and for a brief moment to quiet my fears. As we came in sight of the columns of white stone, they seemed to reach heavenward in a warm salute. I could hardly contain myself. Deep within I was experiencing two simultaneous emotions ... the emotion of joy, and the emotion of fear. My enchanted world had been so good to me. Even now the mountains were spilling their grandeur in an effort to make me feel happy. But with the great moment so close at hand, I was afraid. Desperately afraid.

Page-boys were there to help us from the terra-van. The throng was showering us with flowers, laughter and music. Other page-boys led the way up the flights of ascending steps, now carpeted with velvety, fragrant petals.

We were first taken to the ante-room of the great sanctuary. Here we were to await the announcement of the wedding march. I clung fearfully to LeLando's arm. I was trembling with an unknown dread that would not go away. LeLando did his best to subdue this frantic emotion, but at last even his efforts seemed futile.

„You are so kind dear,” I whispered. „Everyone is so kind. But it's something inside of me. Something I just can't help.”

„Please dearest,” he begged ... just permit your heart to follow in the pathway of love. You will then have nothing to fear.”

„But ... you're sending me away,” I entreated. „You are sending me away. That's what I'm so afraid of.”

„Nothing is going to happen to you, my fair one ... so long as you keep love in your heart.”

LeLando's healing words and 'the strange mystical music, did sooth me a little after a time. It was a beautiful rendition of the Wedding March and it was all for me.

From the left of the altar, four small boys made their appearance. They were attired in flowing robes of white, coming in two by two and moving slowly to the foot of the altar where they stood, two abreast. Bowing first to each other, then to the audience, with fingers spread wide apart, palms of the hands turned upward, they ended the

ritual with the sign of the Crux Ensata upon their foreheads. They then took their places as sentinels of God.

The big moment came at last.

„It is time, my dearest,” LeLando caressed tenderly.

My body trembled. I tried again and again to gain composure as the six little flower girls led the way down the aisle, adorned in garlands of flowers over their pretty heads.

I came next, followed by Cactus Jeff Stringfeller and Blue Cloud, the Indian, Cactus Jeff, who was innately awkward anyway, tumbled over himself with nervousness. I looked toward Blue Cloud for help.

When I reached the holy altar in front of LeLando, I felt an overpowering urge to kneel and pray. I wanted this holy light to shine upon my bared head. To feel the ecstasy of divine emanations as they filtered through my heart. I must have strength to meet this ordeal. When the portals would be finally closed, perhaps forever, I wanted something to remember. Lolita the beautiful! She would always be there. She would never grow old. They would be there together. They would stay young together. The smothering pain in my heart seemed to drive the fever deeper into my brain. It’s no use, I agonized, He’s mine, All mine.”

The entrance of the High Priest brought me to attention. How magnificent he looked, standing there in his azure blue robe, embroidered with the emblems of wisdom.

The High Priest bowed his head in meditation. Then each in turn, we took our places at the altar. I again bowed my head for a moment of silence. Blue Cloud followed suit. But Cactus Jeff remained stubborn.

„I ain't gettin' down on my prayer-knuckles for nobody,” he mumbled under his breath.

In the throes of conscience, I ignored him.

„Oh, dear God,” I prayed passionately. „Help me in this moment of trial. Let this hateful jealousy die on the altar fire. Oh ... please God ... take it away from me. Take it away! Amen.”

Concluding my prayer, for a few moments I was wrapped in a heavenly feeling of relaxation. The song-chant of the many perfectly blended voices added something more to the harmony. As the echoing voices died away, the faint strains of harp music continued.

The High Priest, coming out of his meditation, ran his long, slender fingers down the middle of a large sheet of parchment. Lifting his kindly eyes, he turned first to me, then to LeLando.

„Son of Venus ... Daughter of Earth ... in union you shalt be made as One.”

LeLando bowed his head in holy tribute, to the decree of his good father. I did likewise, as I supposed this was the proper ritual. The High Priest then took each of our hands and clasped them tightly. With a golden needle, he pierced the veins of our wrists so that the blood of LeLando and my own red blood, flowed in one stream together.

I stood mute and motionless, as the Priest read from the parchment. The words flowed over my head like wispy images. I couldn't seem to follow them or join them. The pressure of LeLando's hand in mine finally helped me to gather into unity the fragments of this holy man's words. I was impressed with the close relationship between our marriage ceremony and theirs.

„Do you, LeLando, take this woman to be your lawful wedded wife ... to love and to cherish ... to have and to hold, and forsaking all others, will cleave to her, and to her only as long as you both shall live?”

„I do!” LeLando's rich, mellow voice rang out.

I was struggling valiantly for poise. I am sure I had only a hazy idea of what was happening to me. The High Priest's words fell like dream notes in my ears.

„Do you, Dana, take this man to be your lawful wedded husband, to love and to cherish, to have and to hold, and forsaking all others, will cleave to him, and to him only, as long as you both shall live?”

„I do!” I repeated, my words barely above a whisper. LeLando was placing a ring upon my finger, I heard the High Priest pronounce us man and wife. Then followed, a silence ... a silence that held the breath of Eternity in its very core.

LeLando was taking me in his arms. He was kissing me on the lips. The blessings of the High Priest were being bestowed upon us.

The white-robed boys were bowing low. The flower girls were casting flowers at our feet.

It was all over now, and I was going away. I might never return. Despite all my avowals, I was seized with a bitter heart pain. What were words of prophecy balanced against the heat of love? With oceans of space separating us, this happiness, I might never experience again.

Like a thief in the night, the plague returned. My soul was again in purgatory. The torment was devastating. My mind was in a daze as I went through the emotions of accepting the blessings of Cactus Jeff, Blue Cloud and Ky-rie. They didn't linger long, for it was apparent Cactus Jeff wanted to be on his way. When they went there was a still wider gulf, for I knew now that Jeff would never change his mind about going back. I would be going alone.

The wedding party adjourned to the ante-room where LeLando was busily engaged in receiving his fellow-Venusians. They were his people. To be sure, they had taken me into their warm heart, but I was not of them.

Lolita was there, clinging to his hand. Yes ... there had been something between them! Suspicion gave way to fury. Fury gave way to tempest. Suddenly all T could hear was the loud ticking of a clock inside my head. Then all was quiet again, Far, far away I could hear the echo of voices ...a rhythmized word-chant as though they were intoning a prayer.

The bells toll out! „Our good Queen is dead. Open wide the portals. Open up the gates of heaven.”

I recoiled in terror. In this moment of crisis I felt the full import of lonely abandonment. Queen Zo-na was dead. No! No! It couldn't be true.

Time passed and the clock in my head started again, ticking louder and louder.

Then it came over me like a flash. Perhaps I had been partly responsible. I had brought the evil of jealousy to this wonderful land. I had cursed this golden city. I had betrayed the trust of the High Priest. I had hastened Queen Zo-na's end.

Although the weeping and wailing continued, my soul seemed to sink into an eternity of silence. My sobbing heart was breaking, I wanted to go home. Back to my earthly home.

The poignancy of the pain made me pray for oblivion. To be back on earth and rid of it all. The time came finally for my departure. LeLando's arm around me, we stood waiting to go aboard the luxurious space ship. This one was even more elaborate and beautiful than the interplanetary liner I had come over on.

LeLando took me in his arms, kissing me a 'last goodbye.' I went aboard voluntarily, my head high and my sobs held in check. But once aboard the tears started streaming down my cheeks. I waved to LeLando, Ona, David and all my Venus friends.

Despite my weeping heart, I was no longer afraid of the future, I felt sure that LeLando's love would go with me to the farthest point of the universe. Ours had been more than a romance. It was a love that had fused two souls ... a love that would last throughout all Eternity.

My trip to Venus was over. The fevered heat of suns and storms had cooled at last.

THE END

ADDENDUM

MY FLIGHT TO VENUS was written some fifteen years ago, long before the coming of magenta-lighted space ships and so-called „flying saucers.” It would today appear more in the nature of prophesy than coincidence that the soul-arousing stories coming from all parts of the world, and the writer's erstwhile experience, should be so significantly irrefutable.

Since we are not equipped with a proper transcendental vocabulary, it is difficult to translate into expression something the world has not grown up to. It was for that reason the book was presented to publishers in the style of fiction, much of the virgin knowledge, and many esoteric abstractions, omitted. The purpose of this addendum is to pick up and include some of that important material. But despite these deletions, the book was decried as „too fantastic” and so the manuscript was stored away to await a more propitious time.

In the past we have permitted our intellectual meanderings to obscure the intangibles and ignore the „unknown.” Consequently, as a necessary prelude to explaining any abstract phenomena the perceptions must first be trained to receive it. It is hoped now that the world is truly seeking for some intelligent answer to the Saucerian mystery, this book will be found acceptable.

The writer make no fantastic claims that her „flight to Venus” was made in her physical body. Neither does she disclaim the possibility. As a messenger of spirit, afloat in transdimensional consciousness, it is virtually impossible to discern the physical from the *superphysical*; the so-called real from the genuinely real. Furthermore, it is of little consequence whether the trip was made in the physical body, or the soul body. While it is never easy to convince a doubting

world that the human vehicle can be sensitized to the point of releasing the soul to travel in the higher ethers, such certifications appear all through recorded history. The soul, freed of its ponderous body, can pierce dimension after dimension of etheric space. The soul-traveller merely pioneers the way over all new and uncharted paths. It is the function of the soul to go on ahead to blast the road for the world adventurer to follow.

It is right here we might find one of the answers to our sky enigma. In virtually all sightings, the flying objects have seemed to appear and disappear almost in a flash of time. They are said to possess speed and maneuverability beyond the comprehension or knowledge of our best scientific minds. These same canons of science deny emphatically the probability of interplanetary travel, now or in the future. They insist such flight would be impossible; that it would take incalculable years to make the trip ... a fuel supply too fantastic to imagine ... and a mountain of food-stuff that would reach the stars.

This is all true enough measured with our limited yardstick. But the writer discovered beyond all shadow of doubt there is something beyond space that is impossible to reckon in the light of today's understanding. It was disclosed to her that the Venusians have mastered the art of transmutation. They know how to mold and control the life plasms ... the raw material out of which all things are made. As I dig back into my memory, the Venusians had not yet mastered „direct creation,” but they certainly were a mellenia of years closer to it than we are. We can only catch fleeting glimpses of this divine principle. But, they do live above cause and effect. They think only the kind of quality thoughts that produce right action. Since they have the ability to transmute substance at will, this could readily account for some of the strange maneuvers accredited to flying saucers.

„The question I am asked most frequently is: „What was it like, your trip to Venus?“

Again, it is difficult to put into words something the average mind has not been trained to accept. The listener is wide-eyed with wonder, but often filled with misgivings as to the authenticity of such an adventure.

Let me put it this way: For a time we seemed to literally hurtle through a chimera of etherian skies, vibrating harmoniously with the constantly changing finer forces. The scenery was entrancing ... heavenly skylscapes ... mystic cities ... blue, blue ethers. Mirages perhaps, but real to me.

During flight we seemed to penetrate many dimensions of abstract space. There was no static; no interference. Then something happened. It was like a gentle explosion of gorgeous colors, accompanied by an experience akin to an orgasm of spirit and matter. There was no time after that. No space in the usual connotation of space. All was consciousness ... *absolute consciousness*.

When consciousness is expanded dimensionally, one ephemeral moment of intensified awareness is comparable to weeks, months, or even years, measured in the duration of time as we know it.

In the interim between leaving the earth plane and arrival on Venus it was like starting at a point of concretion, penetrating domain after domain of abstract space, coming again to a concrete world at the journey's end. In other words, going from concretion to concretion. In the story I describe it as „descending“ only because to us, anything that goes up, must come down.

I recall distinctly when I first put foot on Venus I was attired in the robes of earth, but it was all so different. My whole being seemed to be made up of rarified essences. My personal appearance had changed. All physical defects had

vanished. With the heightened vibrations there was a radiance, an alphabet of quality I had never known on earth. While I had never been considered beautiful here, I *was* beautiful on Venus.

This might also be a point in helping to solve the interplanetary riddle. Since my vibrations were speeded up, it is possible when they come into our earth's orbit, theirs are slowed down. Or perhaps I might say, „bogged down” with our smoggy inertia. It is also possible they change their appearance to match our vibrations, just as I changed mine to match theirs. With this in mind, it is possible for Venusians, or other planetary visitors to be here right in our very midst and we would not be aware of it. They could park their saucers in our front yard and we would not see them.

This could also be the reason so few of them have been known to land on our earth plane; they have difficulty accommodating themselves to our vibrations. It could be the reason too they are seldom seen over the cities. But select the cleanest areas possible—high places where the air is abundantly filled with rich chlorophyll – the sandy, sun-drenched deserts.

Getting back to earth, in mid-August of 1952, I had the experience of re-living my Venusian experience all over again. While driving close to Cabot's Old Indian Pueblo, Desert Hot Springs, California, my attention was suddenly captured skyward. Silhouetted against the red and gold of the fading sunset, I saw an exact replica of the luxury-ship that years before had rocketed me to Venus. It was of leviathan size, and perfect in every detail. A considerable distance above the „mother ship,” and making a perfect square in the heavens, were four flying discs. Out there over the broad desert, bathed in a phosphorescent glow, they resembled shiny moons. From my vantage point I could clearly discern lines of radiation extending from the larger craft to the saucers. It seemed quite

apparent to me ‘then, just as it had on Venus, that the tiny craft were being *refueled* by means of the solar rays.

Like the traditional Paul Revere, I wanted to awaken the town to the presence of the „*saucers*” in the sky. But in the interim of starting my war and driving a short quarter of a mile, the pageant was over. Then began to doubt my senses, but the Los Angeles newspaper next morning headlined the story of saucers being seen over the desert skies.

Another question frequently asked: „Why were you chosen for this great adventure?”

In all humility I can only say: I do not know. Perhaps because all of my life I have been fascinated by the so-called „unknown.” A sickly child, confined to my bed for long stretches at a time, I took my play in soul-travel.” I learned then that functioning in a soul-body is no different than functioning in a physical vehicle, except in degree of intensity. In soul travel the mind is perceptive and keen. The intuitions are fired with spiritual dynamics. The answers to anything can always be found in the archives of nature if we are willing to go in search of them. But, almost without exception, human beings are afraid to venture beyond the realm of the „known.” In this I have always been *fearless*.

Again I am asked: „Can you go back and forth at will?”

The answer is, no. There seems to be a time and a place for everything. We can perform as certain miracle once, but rarely can we do it again in the same way. My flight to Venus was prepared for me, by purification in living flame. In recent weeks I have known fleeting moments of that same „strange feeling” and am hopeful that in the not-too-far-distant future I will make a new contact.

Another question: „How is it they can come to us, while we with all our great knowledge, have not yet found a means of going there?”

We function in a three-dimensional world, over-shadowed by a fourth dimension. As I understand it, our „fourth-dimension” would be their „first dimension” ... or grounding premise. Our „fourth dimension” would be comparable to their „seventh.” It would no doubt require a complete education in cosmic mathematics to understand it properly, but it is from the seventh plane that we establish a central relationship with the cosmos itself. The seventh plane is the core ... the center.

The Venusians are transcendentalists. They live in a timeless, spaceless world of *absolute relationships*. Having ingress and egress to all the planes in existence, the entire solar system is theirs to explore.

„How is it they can speak our language?”

The Venusians speak a basic language ... a language of the soul. This is instantly translated into any tongue.

„What of their religion?”

The Venusians are Universalists. They know no dogmas or creeds; no ists or isms. Having developed their own personalities to a point of creativeness they need no Personal Savior ... no Avatar. Theirs might well be terms „a religion of LOVE.” To them love is not a mere sentiment, but a sovereign force, the sustaining element found in the heart of all things. They make few errors for long ago they learned to transmute, through love, the seeds of error. In short, the Venusians have captured the „heart-beat” of the Universe . . . that vibrant quality forever in harmony with the Eternal Plan.

„What have ‘flying saucers’ to do with our own destiny?” Perhaps this is the most important question of them all.

We are living in destiny-altering days. Our pattern has worn thin and we are desperately in need of and new one. It seems, however, we must be tossed about with violence before we grow up to our responsibilities.

Since time immemorial we have been wading through minor cycles. We have fought through the major cycles. As far back as time records, we have been following the same identical pattern. Each groove has made a deeper etching on the same old record.

I sincerely believe the Venusians and other planetary beings are here to help us build new *thought forms* upon which to mold our future.

Perhaps beyond our range of vision there are literally thousands of these unseen mentors trying to immerse us in constructive thought vibrations.

Who can say but the coming of strange spacecraft is a necessary prelude to our own higher cosmology. That they can and will help to uplift our social structure and lighten our travail? Once we can embrace a higher concept (not some grandiose Utopia, but a practical, workable ideology), then we can plunge ahead with certainty.

It is the drama of human progress that great souls come to us at the turn of every new cycle. Unless we invite them in ... unless we help them to make contact in some intelligent way, as in times past, they will leave our plane of vibration perhaps not to return for many regrettable eons of time.

We have reached the age of adulthood. We have encompassed radio, television, the airplane, the atom bomb. Eventually nationalism will give way to internationalism ... internationalism to direct communication and travel to far and remote planets. When this is brought about a universal brotherhood will be established, wars will end and we will have a new heaven on earth.

The Elysian fields are still far away but they have been sighted and we will eventually get there. This is the New Revelation.

DANA HOWARD